セブンス

8th

8

illustration
ともぞ」

Yomu Mishima
三嶋与夢」

ヒーロー文庫

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8
Yomu Mishima
三嶋与夢
illustration
ともぞ
六代目は俺の頭を撫でる。
髪が乱れ、力が強くて少し痛い。
セブンス
7th

メイは手を腰に当てて言った。
「森で火遊びは感心しないね」

「簡単には
取れないわよ」
ミランダが糸を引っ張ると、
麒麟（きりん）は首を振り回す。

タイミング悪く運転席に顔を出したのは、ソフィアだった。
横になり、メイを抱きしめている形になった俺を見て、
耳まで真っ赤にする。
メイはこの状況を理解していないようだ。
――非常にまずい。

『な、何をしているんですかぁあ!!』

「想像以上に
高いんですけど！」

アリアは叫んでいるが、どこか楽しそうにも見えた。
ミランダは落ち着いた様子で、地上を見ている。
対してエヴァは、

「――うん、ライエルは
白馬に乗る王子様ね」

皆疲れているのか、テンションがおかしかった。

歴代当主アーツ紹介 —— 004
プロローグ —— 007
第八十九話　ラウカーン王国 —— 036
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Prologue

I decided to fight my atrocious little sister—Celes.

The result of that was this.

"What's with this wanted poster."

I came to the eastern part of Bahnseim Kingdom on my way toward the free city Beim.

It was a territory that was bordered with other country.

I would cross the border from here and headed to my destination Beim through other country.

Because of that, I was in a city that I had to stop by at no matter what but—.

At the street where many people were passing by, there was a wanted poster for me, Lyle Walt.

The words 'wanted man' were written above my portrait. The charge was national treason.

I tore off one of the many posters that were pasted on the wall disorderly and stared at it.

The one who was staring at the wanted posters beside me was the automaton created by the ancient people, Monica.

Her fluffy blonde hair was tied into twintail and she was wearing red maid uniform.

She looked conspicuous and gathered people's attention but, the person herself didn't look bothered at all.

She called me her master as “chicken dickwad”. She was a maid robot with a screw loose somewhere.

"Oh, the picture captured most of chicken dickwad’s characteristics. Because it’s not color printing, the hair and eye color is explained in the description though."

"Do you think this portrait look similar with me?"

The portrait was really horrible.

It wasn’t that the drawing was poor, but the evilness that was oozing from the picture was terrible. Lionel—Lionel Walt who was harboring resentment toward me must be the one who was ordering this picture.

The picture’s gaze was bad, and the hairstyle was also somewhat thorny.

The description also claimed that I was a swindler who was tricking women.

It didn’t resemble me at all.

"The picture is capturing your characteristics. Even so, that person’s resentment is really large."

Lionel had the same ancestors like me and he was the heir of capital noble Walt House.

In contrast I was the heir of feudal lord noble Walt House—in the past.

Because of some kind of fate, Lionel was chasing after me right now.

"It’s really exaggerated to call me a traitor of the country like this. Even though I still haven’t done anything."

Yes, I “still” hadn’t done anything.

I who decided to defeat Celes would one day enter a battle with this country—Bahnseim Kingdom.

This wanted poster wasn’t really that mistaken.

"We can’t be captured here. I wish we can depart immediately."

Monica checked the detail of the wanted poster.

"That will be desirable but, right now Professor Damian is also with us. There is also that pseudo dump car created by that junk Lily, so we can’t easily leave."

"If it’s just us it will be easy to breakthrough though."

Damian’s Dump Car had similar structure like Porter. But, it was bigger than Porter so it wasn’t maneuverable, in addition it couldn’t be overworked.

Thanks to that we allowed Lionel and his men to get ahead of us.

Monica read the written details while,

"It seems Porter is also mentioned here. But, the matter of Professor Damian isn’t mentioned at all. There are only the details of chicken dickwad and Aria that are written at length."

That was just because he hated me and wanted to get Aria.

"It’s doubtful whether he really intend to catch us or not."

The portrait with bad gaze and didn’t resemble me.

Other than that it only wrote about Porter’s appearance at most.

There should be other things that had to be mentioned in detail. This wanted poster was oozing with Lionel’s personal grudge.

Monica was falling into thought.

"—Fumu, I think we can use this."

"What is?"

"It’s a secret."

Monica said "Do you want to know? If chicken dickwad want to know it no matter what then perhaps~" so I stopped asking her about it in irritation.

Then Monica hurriedly said "Ah, I’m lying. I’m lying so please ask me. It’s lonely if you don’t!" and clung on me.

More importantly, I was glad I was wearing a hooded robe just in case.

I didn’t think that there would be wanted poster of me like this but, I was being extremely careful beforehand.

I ran my gaze to the surrounding.

The city that was near the border was bustling because of the foreign trade.

The merchants who came from other country were opening their stall.

There were doll made from carving wood that he had never seen before, or even many merchandises that he didn’t understand what they would be used for.

The building too. Since they reached the eastern part, somehow the building’s style was different from Bahnseim’s style.

It was similar but—there were also a lot of differences.

"It’s as though this place is also a foreign country."

When I muttered that, the Fifth’s voice came from the Jewel hanging on my neck.

The Fifth—Fredericks Walt was a quiet person. His attitude that was always looking indifferent really left an impression. He was a person with small build. He always looked disinterested no matter what happened.

And yet, in the history of Walt House he was said as a playboy who was keeping four mistresses in addition of his legal wife.

He didn’t look like that kind of person at all.

His green hair was tied into pony tail. He had narrow eyes and looked somewhat gloomy—he was that kind of person.

His cold attitude was standing out, but he definitely possessed kindness too.

He was clumsy—and also possessed a strange side of loving cute animals.

[That’s because this place was foreign country until just a while ago. There will be the remain from that time.]

Foreign country? When I grasped the Jewel in curiosity, the Fifth talked to me with some nostalgia.

[This place was occupied or taken away during the war, that kind of thing. Well, Bahnseim is a big country. It won’t be strange if each region has their own characteristic. What else——right, martial art is also popular here.]

The eastern region of Bahnseim was continuously in a period of upheaval until some time ago where feudal lords were scrambling for territory between each other.

Perhaps because of that, or perhaps because of other cause, even now this was a region where martial art was popular.

The Fifth was strangely knowledgeable about the east.

Why was it even though this place was really far away from Walt House’s territory?

When I started walking, Monica followed me while bringing the wanted poster.

"Chicken dickwad, please wait for me."

I walked carefully so that I wouldn’t collide with the people walking around me.

The voice from the Jewel could only be heard by me.

[It was especially horrible at the era of me and the Fourth. Because of that, there was also a lot of nobles escaping from the east. They were evacuating.]

The feudal lords like Walt House at that time accepted the family of the nobles that were evacuating.

The territory of Walt House was at the southern region of Bahnseim Ktngdom.

Why didn’t the evacuees go to the center but relied on countryside feudal lord instead?

When I touched the Jewel in puzzlement, the Fifth’s reply was—.

[There was no way everyone who evacuated could be received. A part of them relied on Walt House that was located at the south. That was all. One of the reasons was also because Walt House had money at that time.

They made someone they wanted to ask for support to look after their family?

While I was thinking such thing, the Fifth talked in exasperation.

[Don’t you get it? They also served as hostage.]

—What an unpleasant story.

.

When I returned to the inn, the one who welcomed us was Aria who was puffing up her cheeks.

She was approaching me with long big steps. Her red hair was trailing behind her. Then she thrust the wanted poster that she obtained in the city toward me.

"Lyle, just where were you going huh!? Something like this was spread around, so we were worried!"

I apologized to the angry Aria.

"Sorry. There were various things that we had to buy. Besides, there wasn’t really any problem."

I was wearing hooded robe but, people dressed like that wasn’t unusual.

Thanks to that I was able to shop normally.

Or perhaps it was because Lionel making my portrait to be horrible due to his personal resentment?

We were in a large room that we rented. It was big but, it had bunk beds lined up.

There were also toilet and shower, but they were old. They weren’t facilities that you could feel satisfied with.

We were renting this kind of inn—was also to save money. Because there were a lot of us, we hesitated to borrow multiple rooms in an inn with good facilities.

"We were really worried here."

The one placing her elbows on the round table inside the room while cackling was the elf Eva.

Today her pink blond hair was tied up with a string.

It seemed she had gotten back from outside. She was also holding a wanted poster but—it seemed she had one other paper that was different.

"More importantly, there is something amusing. This one is also really funny."

Aria’s face went red and she tried to take it away from Eva.

"Hand it over!"

"No way."

Eva lightly dodged her and handed the wanted poster to me.

Monica was peering to it from behind me.

"Oh, this one is missing person poster? This beautiful woman is—Aria Lockwarde?"

The poster was drawn with the portrait of a beautiful woman.

In the description, it was written that the woman had red hair and really clear purple eyes—that kind of eulogy was continuing on.

In contrast with my wanted poster, the portrait of this one was a beautified Aria.

Aria was hiding her face with both her hands in shame.

"That idiot! What is his intention shaming me like this!?"

Lionel was in love with Aria.

But, Aria disliked him, and it seemed this portrait was also rubbing her the wrong way.

"It’s amazing. There were a lot of these posters put up at the place where we went shopping. But, no one noticed Aria there."

Eva laughed. Aria was glaring at her from the gap of her fingers.

"Eva, what do you want to say?"

"Not really? But, I just want to say that a missing person poster is meaningless if it’s beautified too much that no one noticed the searched person. That Lionel guy, does he really want to capture us?"

Certainly it was really doubtful.

"I’m uglier than this portrait anyway!"

Aria spat out those words. Eva responded with a snort.

"I’m not saying that far. Stop venting your anger to me."

"You’re the one making fun of me!"

The two of them glared at each other.

I covered my face with one hand and sighed.

"—There is a lot of quarrel recently."

Even though I wanted to renew my determination at Centralle, the girls were in friction with each other all the time.

In the first place the only men here were only me and Damian, so the relationship between the girls was bad meant that most of my comrades didn’t get along with each other.

Monica was explaining with a smile at me who was making a tired face.

"It’s only the problem coming up to the surface, their relationship was already strained since the start. This is why flesh and blood woman is no good. Chicken dickwad is lucky you have me."

"You too are always picking a fight with the people around you. Can you stop that?"

This one too was also pouring oil to fire in her own way so it was troublesome.

Aria and Eva were starting to grapple with each other.

"This useless elf?"

"Now you said it, this useless woman!"

They were starting to throw low level insult to each other, so I came between them to mediate.

There Miranda appeared with Shannon in tow.

Miranda who returned from outside was in a really good mood.

"Everyone listen. There is wanted poster for Lyle. Also, look! There is the cute missing person poster for Aria too with it. It said that she is the lovely maiden who is captured by the heinous Lyle."

Miranda showed the wanted poster with a really bright smile.

She was a woman with light green hair that reached until her shoulder and the atmosphere of an older big sister, but at the same time she also had the atmosphere of a mischievous child.

She was a reliable big sister who was able to do anything skillfully, but—.

"Miranda, you’re also laughing at me?"

Miranda turned a meaningful smile at Aria whose hair was messed up from the scuffle and answered.

"Oh, I’m just saying the truth. But, even though there are these many wanted posters circulated, we are still at large like this. What a shabby effort. I was laughing at Lionel but, it looks like Aria is feeling like you’re being laughed at."

Aria couldn’t say anything back.

In order to vent out her feeling of irritation, she took the spear that leaning on the wall and went outside.

"Ah, wait!"

I tried to stop her but,

"I’m just going to swing my spear for a bit. Right now I just want to move my body."

Eva turned toward the back figure of Aria who was leaving the room and stretched the corner of her mouth with her finger while saying "ble~h".

Miranda shrugged slightly.

"I made her angry."

I looked at Miranda.

"You did it deliberately right?"

"Yes, that’s right."

Miranda declared without looking guilty at all. It made me wanted to hold my head.

"Please don’t make her angry like that."

"It’s troubling too that she get irritated just from this. More importantly, it looks like that Lionel is serious."

There was problem with this useless wanted poster and his method but—Lionel himself was serious.

Because of that I didn’t know whether we would be able to cross the border safely or not.

"Surely the border is being watched. Because they know we are heading to Beim."

The problem was the route.

The route toward Beim was fixed to a certain degree.

Taking other route than that would be a long detour.

If we took a different route, then we would have pass through several small countries.

While I was worrying about what to do from here on, Shannon was looking up at my face while holding the wanted poster.

Shannon was Miranda’s little sister. She was the youngest among us.

She had small body and long light purple hair.

Her characteristic golden eyes were mystic eyes.

Even though she possessed amazing mystic eyes, she was a sad girl who was unable to use them well.

—By the way, I hated her.

I was unable to like the existence of little sister no matter what.

"What?"

"This wanted poster, it looks exactly like you."

She showed my wanted poster while smirking widely with a horrible face and wicked gaze.

"You’re really an unpleasant fellow."

"Only to you. How about you just get caught instead?"

"What did you say?"

I pinched her cheeks. She moaned "It hurts, it hurts" with tearful eyes.

It felt pleasant to pinch at the soft cheeks.

Miranda was watching us with a warm gaze, but this wasn’t a fun situation at all for me.

Eva cut in.

"Don’t play around and think seriously. At this rate we’ll have to take the long way to head to Beim."

I got slightly embarrassed and let go of Shannon’s cheeks.

"You, you’re right. Err, in that case—what to do?"

Although, I couldn’t think of a solution right away.

If we took the long way, then there would be many problems.

There would be no problem with language, but if we passed through many countries, we would also get bossed around by the rules or laws of those countries.

It would also be really uneasy to not know about the local terrain.

It would be easier to advance through the standard route toward Beim.

The path was well maintained, and there would be inns too along the way.

Advancing through nonstandard route would be hard with Damian accompanying us.

Even with the Seventh's Art, Box, Damian's Dump Car couldn't be stored in it.

Also, it would take a lot of time.

While I was worrying, the Fifth talked to me.

[It will be a bit far, but if you're alright with it then I'll show you the way.]

—The Fifth offered to be our guide.

***

—On the other hand around that time, there was someone irritated in the fortress located at the border of Bahnseim Kingdom's eastern region.

The border's checkpoint was located in a spot that was surrounded by mountains and blocked the only path there.

Inside the fortress near it, Lionel who was wearing extravagant knight uniform swung down his fist on the table.

"Why they haven't been found yet!?"

"Please calm down, captain-dono."

A knight with streaks of white hair was troubled at how to treat Lionel who was the captain of the Special Elite Guards of Celes who became the crown princess.

Lionel held a powerful authority that could give order to them. He was like their superior.

Because they also couldn’t treat him rudely, the knight with high rank who was entrusted with the fortress was dealing with him.

"The wanted poster has been distributed to the surrounding. Besides, if they’re heading to Beim, they should pass through this checkpoint."

"Is that true?"

"Yes. There is also other path but, everyone will choose this path when they’re heading to Beim. It’s really unthinkable that they’ll use other path than this."

"Is that so? If it’s me I’ll go through other path. You don’t even understand something this simple?"

What is this guy talking about?

The knight hid his exasperated emotion from his face and explained subserviently.

"This path is often used because this is a well maintained path and easy to use. If they carelessly take a detour, they will need a local guide. There is a reason why the merchants and adventurers choose this route."

"Do, don’t talk back! You just need to follow my order!"

The surrounding got sick with Lionel’s arrogant attitude.

The knight dealing with him talked to his subordinate with a small voice.

"Who is this guy? I know about the elite guards of her highness the crown princess but, why is he coming to this kind of place and throw his weight around?"

"I don’t know. It seems he is chasing after a rebel but—"

The knight and his subordinate looked at the wanted poster that was created by Lionel’s order.

The portrait looked exactly like Lionel with his irritated look, frowning eyebrows, and messed up hair.

The two of them couldn’t hide their bewilderment.

The other poster was the beautiful female adventurer who was tricked and taken away by that rebel.

"Is there an adventurer this beautiful? I have adventurer acquaintances but, they’re all lamenting that there are only strong-willed women around them."

The knight massaged his forehead with his fingers.

"The central is completely strange recently. Good grief, just what’s going on? Besides, he talked about rebel but, there isn’t any notification at all from the central."

Central—the Centralle that was the capital of this country didn’t send them any order at all.

But, Lionel barged in here and threw his weight around while giving order.

They had to obey even then was because Lionel was proving that he had the rank that allowed him to do so.

The knights and soldiers in the eastern region that was far away from the capital didn’t know at all just what was going on at the central.

Because of that, they were producing wanted posters that declared Lyle as rebel.

There was no order from Celes to do so. It was an act of Lionel that was simply caused by his personal enmity.

Lionel was biting his thumb’s nail in irritation.

"Shit-! There isn’t anyone useful at all here. Even though I have to save Aria quickly."

The knight and his subordinate were watching Lionel in exasperation outside of his sight—.

***

We who chose a different route other than the shortest route from Bahnseim Kingdom to Beim was now in a different checkpoint.

The checkpoint’s soldiers were watching Damian’s Dump Car in fear.

"A metal box can move even without horse. The era has changed."

The knight who was in charge of the checkpoint muttered.

Dump Car gathered the surrounding’s attention no matter what.

"Can we pass?"

When I asked the knight, he nodded even while looking troubled.

"No problem."

I faced Damian who was sitting on Dump Car’s passenger seat and waved my hand.

The one who was sitting on the driver’s seat was Lily-san who was an automaton like Monica. She skillfully controlled the driving wheel and the large vehicle advanced through the narrow path.

The knight was watching in worry that the checkpoint might get damaged.

"How is that thing move?"

"It’s a magic tool developed in Arumsaas. Perhaps its use will be spread out before long."

"A vehicle that doesn’t need horse. It seems convenient but, I prefer using horse. It’s more reassuring."

I was talking while looking at the checkpoint’s bulletin board.

The wanted posters of me and Aria were also placed here.

But the knight didn’t show any sign of noticing.

The wanted poster that Lionel modified strangely couldn’t be used to find us out.

It was really helpful because of that but, it was troubling that the wanted posters were sent out even until this checkpoint.

When I looked inside the building, I could see a bundle of paper that seemed to be the wanted posters piled up high.

It seemed that it would be distributed in this area after this.

At this rate, my name would be propagated as rebel even until other countries.

Monica said "Please leave it to me!" about this but—it made me worried.

The knight scratched his head with his pen.

"Even so, recently the number of adventurer is increasing huh."

"You mean, the number of adventurer going through this checkpoint?"

"Yeah, that’s right. You don’t know?"

The knight talked as though it was a common knowledge but, I honestly told him that I didn’t know.

"Did something happen?"

Hearing that the knight put his pen into his pocket and rubbed his fingers together with a thin smile.

The Seventh was irritated by that gesture.

[Even the knights of the eastern region isn’t a big deal it seems.]

The Third was laughing in objection.

[I think it’s the same everywhere though. Earning extra money like this is common. But, it’s cheap if you can listen to the story. How much the price usually is in this situation?]

The ancestors started to talk with a lively air. In the end they decided to pay one silver coin.

When I took out a silver coin from my pocket and handed it to the knight, he made a surprised face.

"Oi, it’s not a talk that worth this much."

"I just want to listen to it in detail. Well, perhaps we might use this place again in the future, so this is also for a greeting."

"I, is that so? Then I’ll tell you about it in detail."

The knight led me to the checkpoint’s building and talked to me there.

Monica also came along as though it was only natural. The knight seemed to want to say something but he gave up.

If the story was summarized—.

At the other side of Bahnseim’s east border, there were small countries jumbled together.

Among them there was a country that recently became influential.

Perhaps it discovered a dungeon and managed it well, because suddenly the amount of magic stone that country sold increased.

Merchants and adventurers gathered, and right now its national power was apparently outdoing its surrounding countries by quite much.

The knight who explained that to me said this at the end—.

"If there is anything suspicious, tell me when you get back. I don’t want to get dragged if there is a dungeon rampaging out there after all."

If the management of dungeon was mistaken, it would rampage and unleashed monsters to the outside. Because a lot of monsters would go outside and rampaged around, a careless management wouldn’t end up becoming the problem of a single country.

After all, most of the cases like that didn’t stop with just the destruction of a single country.

The knight was concerned about that.

"That country is—"

"It’s Laukaan Kingdom, one of the countries in the alliance. I heard that recently its influence is in the rise."

***

[The eastern region was an area where the feudal lords endlessly occupied and reoccupied each other’s territory. But, there were also some of them that declared independence from the kingdom.]

We were slowly walking around Dump Car on the narrow path.

We brushed away the stones and branches that got in the way of the travel while going forward.

The one who was giving me the details regarding the eastern region was the Fifth as expected.

"Independence?"

I replied with a small voice that the others around couldn’t hear.

[It was because the central’s eye didn’t reach until the eastern region. A feudal lord declaring independence and swallowed his surrounding territory happened relatively often.]

"Something like that, how should I say it—"

Why did they betray the country? The Fifth seemed to guess my feeling and laughed slightly.

[Do you think it’s horrible? But, even those feudal lords have their reason. It wasn’t amusing for them that the central who didn’t even give any satisfactory aid to the eastern region was ordering them to do this and that.]

The knights who swallowed territory and became feudal lord.

But, there were also a lot of skirmishes. Even though other country was invading, Bahnseim Kingdom didn’t do anything.

Although, the kingdom also had its own circumstance. The territory around this area was protruding out greatly to the east. It would take too much time, money, and effort to dispatch army here.

[Even for the kingdom, it was more convenient for them that those feudal lords declared independence. When the feudal lords declared independence, the kingdom immediately recognized it evne while complaining. But, because of that it became a material for conspiracy theory though. People were talking that it’s strange the kingdom easily recognize the independence, that there is something behind the scene.]

The country let them go because there were many troubles with keeping them.

Was it fine like that?

"Conspiracy? Was there really something like that?"

The Sixth answered that.

[It’s unknown now. Perhaps there was a conspiracy, or perhaps there wasn’t. In the first place, I too also did a lot of things but, there were a lot of absurd story that got embellished by rumors. After all there is also a lot of lies in conspiracy theory.]

The Sevent sounded nostalgic.

[There was things like that wasn’t it. There was this rumor was it, that Walt House is aiming for the throne?]

[There was also others but, at that time that was the biggest one was it? In the first place the throne is a troublesome thing. I was busy with my enlarged territory, and I also wasn’t interested and yet the people around made a ruckus. It was really annoying.]

When the Sixth and the Seventh started talking about their hardships at that time, the Fifth talked to me.

[Anyway, there are a lot of small countries at the opposite side of Bahnseim's eastern region. Those small countries gathered and created an alliance.]

"So it's something like small countries within a country?"

[It's the same like Bahnseim Kingdom. It's just that the feudal lords introduced themselves as king. If there is a difference then it's the leader of the alliance perhaps? At my era I heard that the decision there was made by the kings having discussion with each other. There shouldn't be an alliance leader.]

The Fourth was exasperated.

[Can they be united with that kind of method?]

The Third replied bluntly.

[Rather than unity, isn't that a place to decide the rule of that region? After all everyone don't want to do something like a war without rule.]

"Rule for war?"

[That's important. After all nothing will remain if they clash seriously. Putting poison inside the river and massacre all the people in that area~, you can't laugh at something like that. That's absolutely cannot be done. It's important to not be picky with your method in order to win but, this is different from that. Lyle too, it's no good if you mistake that.]

Even I understood that something like that was no good.

[What’s important is to not lose sight of your objective—and of how you yourself should be. If you think that anything is fine, then you’re just the same with Celes.]

"I understand."

The Fifth returned to the topic.

[—I’m concerned with the country called Laukaan. Perhaps it’ll be fine to check there for a bit before heading to Beim. If it’s really keeping dungeon, then it’ll be extremely troublesome.]

The ancestors suddenly fell silent.

After that, the Fourth was the one to open his mouth.

[Lyle, can we leave it to you?]

"I myself have no problem with that but, won’t it be better to hurry?"

[This is something that worth that much.]

I obeyed the Fourth’s word and decided to head to Laukaan.

"Laukaan is it? I wonder what is there."

The Fifth said to me.

[We’re going there to investigate because we don’t know. More importantly, Lyle—about your Art, can you use it properly?]

My new Art—”that” was incredibly hard to handle.

No, how to use it was actually simple.

It was my own Art, so I understood how to use it more than anyone.

It was exactly because I understood that it was hard to handle it.

"Honestly, I think it’s unusable."

[—I also can understand your feeling but, it’ll be no good if you don’t manage it somehow.]

I understood even without the Fifth telling me but—the use of that was a bit particular.

If possible I didn’t want to use it.

***

—Damian’s Dump Car.

Many items were piled up in its cargo carrier.

The one who was going through inside that place where it was difficult to even find the place to step on was Sophia. Her long black hair and her robe that was hiding her body line often got caught by the items.

She advanced through a cramped corridor that caused her large breasts that couldn’t be hidden by her robe to be squashed. Then Damian’s work bench came into view.

"E, excuse me. I have a message from Lyle-dono. We’re going to head to Laukaan."

Damian who was facing his work table was a man with small build and brown hair that looked like it was exploded.

He took off his goggle and turned toward Sophia and—.

"Aah, I see. More importantly who are you?"

—Damian who didn’t remember her name even though she had told him multiple times was a genius who worked as professor in academy city Arumsaas.

However, his personality was terribly problematic.

Sophia answered the question that had been asked to her for many times.

"It’s Sophia. Rather than that, what are you creating this time?"

Damian held no interest toward Sophia. His gaze returned to the item he was creating.

"Don’t you understand from looking? It’s prosthetic arm."

Over there was a prosthetic arm that seemed to be human’s left arm.

Sophia understood.

"So that’s Clara-san’s new prosthetic arm!"

But Damian tilted his head.

And then, after some time passed,

"Now that you mention it, that girl’s name is that isn’t it? Yep, I’m making the prosthetic arm of that girl. After all Lyle asked me to."

Sophia was exasperated.

"Even though you remember Lyle-dono’s name, you won’t remember our name."

She said—.

***

—Clara who was sitting on Porter’s driver seat was slightly bewildered after hearing their plan after this from Novem.

"Laukaan? We’ll stop by there but, is there any reason for us to stay there?"

Because her prosthetic arm was destroyed by Celes, she only had one arm right now.

She had blue hair and red eyes.

Clara who was wearing glasses looked at Novem.

Novem had a face that held no doubt at all toward Lyle’s decision.

"It seemed Lyle-sama heard a curious story at the checkpoint. He must wish to check it out."

Novem had glossy light brown hair that was tied into side ponytail.

Her violet eyes looked shining.

Clara’s role in the party was as supporter, but she also could use magic somewhat. But, from Clara’s perspective, Novem was in a different level.

She was an expert magician.

And above all else, she was someone who that Celes was wary to.

Because of that, Miranda thought that Novem was hiding something. A large gap was created between them.

"—Understood."

And then, Clara was also the same.

Clara could see that Novem was devoted to Lyle but—she was also thinking that Novem had some kind of secret that couldn’t be said even to her comrades.

That was why, she couldn’t honestly consider her as a "reliable magician" like before.

After Novem finished her business and left the driver seat area, Clara sighed and took off her glasses with her right hand.

"This is troubling."

Clara noticed that the atmosphere of the party was different from before—.

Chapter 89 – Laukaan Kingdom

We passed several checkpoints and arrived at Laukaan Kingdom.

As expected from a place that was called as a small country, it only had one city.

Fortresses and villages were dotting its surrounding.

As for its atmosphere as a country—.

"It’s similar with Bahnseim’s eastern region. Rather it’s exactly the same."

The building’s style and atmosphere was similar with the place where we were staying at before crossing the border.

Clara who was standing beside me was holding a book with one arm while answering me. She was flipping the pages skillfully using her finger.

"There was a time when this area was a territory of Bahnseim Kingdom. After that, the feudal lords declared independence to form small countries that stood together in disorderly faship. After the war continued, the alliance of the countries was formed."

It was the same with the Fifth’s explanation.

"Alliance of countries huh."

"Because it’s a gathering of small countries, the scale isn’t big. The scale is smaller than even Bahnseim’s eastern region."

Small countries gathered into alliance where it and Bahnseim Kingdom’s eastern region were glaring at each other.

Clara closed her book and put it inside her bag.

When I helped her because it took much effort doing it with one arm, she nodded at me in thanks.

"Thank you very much. Even so—"

Clara then turned her gaze to the surrounding.

We had been passing through several countries but, there was a big difference between Laukaan and those countries of the alliance that we stopped by at.

"This place is really bustling."

"You’re right."

There were many people here.

It felt like I would collide with other people if I let my mind wandered.

A new wall was being constructed outside the wall that was surrounding the city.

The inside of the city also had various constructions being added. I could see buildings being destroyed. At the same time, there were also new buildings being constructed everywhere.

"It’s like the city is being born again."

Eva’s eyes sparkled when I muttered my impression.

"There’re so many people. I want to sing at this kind of place. Hey, if we’re going to rest anyway, let me sing here for a day at least. Please, Lyle."

Eva put her hands together and begged. Clara averted her face from her.

"Say it if there is something you want to say, you stubborn glasses."

"I don’t have anything I want to say to a liar elf."

"You say that again! Just what is bad from making a story become a bit more exciting!? It can’t be helped!"

"I wish that you won’t falsify a story for such reason. This is why I hate elf."

These two also had bad relation.

The girls who got along in my party were—Miranda and Shannon? I thought that Aria and Sophia also got along, I also sometimes caught sight of Novem and Eva talking.

"The party’s state is like the alliance of these countries."

When I sighed, a chuckle came from the Jewel.

[I understand what you want to say. Several groups are forming within a single party. Well, it’s a problem but, for now let’s observe the situation.]

The Fourth’s words made me uneasy.

Would we be alright from here on?

Then, the Fifth advised me.

[If it’s a quarrel that can obstruct the objective that it’ll be fine if you arbitrate it. But other than that—pretend to not see anything. You will only get tired if you mind about it too much.]

The Fourth spoke in sarcasm toward such advice.

[As expected from someone who had five wives, there is weight in your words.]

[—Shut up.]

The Fifth didn’t say anything again after that.

Even though he was known as playboy by the later generation, the Fifth would say to me to take distance in regard to handling woman. Did he really keep a lot of woman in the past?

If he liked woman, in my image he would be more burning with desire.

Like the Sixth.

When he ran away from home, he made a child at the place he went. That was the Sixth.

Furthermore, the person himself didn’t know that fact, so he was beyond help.

Perhaps because he would get criticized when the topic of woman relationship came up, today the Sixth was also quiet.

"It’s just like I heard in the checkpoint. There are a lot of merchants but, there are also a lot of adventurers here."

The adventurers who seemed to gather from various places.

Merchants and adventurers would also gather at place that was doing well.

The local people would also profit from doing business that was targeted to that kind of people.

The Fourth seeing the local situation was,

[They did something without a doubt. The highest possibly is a dungeon perhaps?]

Dungeon.

It was something that suddenly appeared.

Inside a forest with abundant nature.

Or perhaps in a place like abandoned castle. I heard dungeon also appeared in that kind of place.

It was unknown where it would appear.

The inside would become a labyrinth. Not just traps, there would be monsters roaming around.

Adventurers were people who leaped into such dangerous place.

Dungeon was attracting people.

After all, there would be extravagant treasure sleeping inside the deeper you advanced into it, in order to invite people into such dangerous place.

There was also exception but, dungeon was a place that was dangerous but where you could profit just as much.

And then, dungeon was alive.

If it was subjugated, it would wither—it would die and vanished.

If the treasure sleeping at the deepest place was taken away, dungeon would wither and vanish.

And such dungeon, rather than destroying it right away, wouldn’t it be the best if people live in symbiosis with it by continuing to gather magic stone and treasure from it?

There were many country that thought so and attempted to manage a dungeon.

In fact, there were also several dungeons that were being managed in Bahnseim Kingdom.

The dungeon wasn’t destroyed and they obtained the treasures that the dungeon created continuously. —So to speak, it was like a mine.

[It’s difficult to show result with the honest method, if it can develop this much in such short time—as expected it must be a dungeon.]

The Third spoke with a displeased tone.

When the management failed, dungeon would run wild.

If the dungeon ran wild, it would release monsters that attacked the surrounding countries.

There were even countries that vanished just because a single dungeon ran wild.

It would become a disaster if it was handled wrong.

For the monsters, something like national border didn’t exist.

Just because a single country failed, the surrounding countries also got harmed was—something that had happened many times.

The Fourth made a forced cough.

[Now then—if there is such bothersome dungeon, then we should destroy it no matter what. That will be for the sake of this country too. The surrounding countries will also feel relieved. Working for the sake of the weak people living in this land is also our duty as a knight, and also as a noble!]

Let’s do our best for everyone’s sake!

It sounded like he was saying something good but, I too had been together with these people for a year.

I completely understood what they wanted to say. I pressed my forehead with one hand.

The Third was also motivated.

[We will also obtain the treasure while we're at it for our war funds in the future!]

The Sixth also raised his voice.

[From here no matter how much many we have it won't be enough. Lyle, let's warm your wallet before heading to Beim. This is procurement of war fund!]

The Seventh was also sounding delighted.

[It's a great nuisance that they're managing a dungeon even though they don't have the knowhow! Lyle, let's do our best here, for the sake of the world and also for the sake of our objective.]

The Fourth's voice joined in without any disharmony.

[The treasure of this country is ours!]

The chance to obtain treasure had arrived—the Fourth said that in great joy.

This.

This was the true intention of the ancestors.

They said that they were concerned but—as expected their true target was the treasure at the deepest part of the dungeon.

But, the Fifth was the only one who was strangely quiet.

***

—Night.

That cave was in the forest of Laukaan Kingdom.

The entrance was camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding trees. There were knights and soldiers stationed here to constantly act as lookout.

Right now a figure showed up at the hidden cave.

The cave’s entrance was scorched black.

Small flame was burning the surrounding grasses. The watch-keeping knights and soldiers were lying on the ground.

Everyone was breathing but they didn’t show any sign of standing up.

One soldier lifted his face.

"Wha, what in the world?"

Before he fainted, he was suddenly assaulted by intense light. After that he heard sound of explosion.

His ears hurt even now.

He was blown away and lost consciousness. How much time had passed since then?

When the soldier moved his face to look around, he saw his superior and coworkers were also lying on the ground.

"I, I've to notify someone quickly."

The cave was a dungeon that Laukaan Kingdom kept secret from the surrounding countries and even from their own people.

Knights and soldiers were dispatched here for training and also for obtaining magic stone and treasure at the same time.

This was the secret of Laukaan Kingdom that suddenly grew stronger rapidly in the recent time.

Several dungeons like this existed in this country.

The soldier tried to stand, but strength wouldn't enter his body and he couldn't move.

He was also concerned that fire was gradually spreading around.

"Shit, what the hell."

Then—he heard the sound of horse's hooves.

Furthermore the sound came from inside the cave.

The footsteps were unhurried and firm.

The soldier suddenly felt a chill on his back.

Cold sweat was trickling down.

There wasn't any horse that was brought into the dungeon.

If something was coming out, it was surely a monster.

He was trembling imagining that he would be eaten by monster in his state that couldn't even stand.

While he was thinking to pretend to be dead to go through this situation, the footsteps stopped near him.

It seemed to be a really big monster. The vibration from each step was big.

Even though he mustn’t tremble, his trembling wouldn’t stop.

The several seconds felt like several minutes or even several hours.

A voice addressed such soldier.

—A human voice.

"Tell this to your boss. Don’t do something unnecessary."

When the soldier raised his face toward that young voice, the moon showed with a good timing from behind a cloud. It illuminated the form of the beautiful creature.

It looked like horse but, it was different.

A horn that looked like a curved single-edged blade was growing from its forehead.

Its blue eyes were emitting light like jewel.

Its body was covered with scales like dragon.

The beautiful white scales reflected the golden color of its horn and mane, making it looked sparkling.

The soldier gulped seeing that figure.

When that creature ran off, it was gradually parting from the ground and dashed up as though there was an unseen road in the air.

Light scattered like breaking glass when it kicked on the air. The lights were flowing like a tailing trail.

The beautiful creature left behind the trail of its flying in the night sky and vanished.

"Di, divine beast? I, it’s the first time I saw one."

The soldier finally could move his mouth and muttered the name of the divine beast that vanished to the night sky.

"So that’s a qilin."

It wasn’t a normal beast or a monster, that creature that was called as divine beast was a qilin—.

***

—The next day after Lyle’s group came to Laukaan.

Aria and Sophia showed themselves in the adventurer guild and checked the wanted posters there.

If Lyle was wanted here as rebel, he would have to be careful in his action from here on.

However, there wasn’t any wanted poster for Lyle from what they could see.

"Looks like the wanted poster isn’t send until this far."

Aria was also able to confirm that there wasn’t any missing person poster for her and felt relieved.

"This is other country after all. Perhaps he is unable to pursue until this far?"

Sophia moved her gaze from the bulletin board that was covered with wanted posters to the inside of the guild.

There were a lot of adventurers. And yet, because the guild building itself was small, it felt terribly cramped.

The number of people suddenly increased, so it felt like the guild couldn’t deal with it.

There were also a lot of adventurers lining up in front of the reception.

"Somehow there is crowd everywhere we’re going."

It wasn’t just the inn.

The bar, market, every place was overflowing with people.

There were even adventurers putting up tent and living there.

People doing business targeted to such adventurers also gathered and the city was expanding until outside the wall.

Aria also had the same opinion with Sophia’s view.

"It felt like the outside of the wall is overflowing with people. There’re so many monsters in this area so the adventurers also aren’t troubled with work it seems."

Sophia looked at the rate that was written on the blackboard.

The price of the magic stone’s purchase was written but, it was the highest price in this area.

In addition the tax was also low.

"There is work and the tax is also low. The purchase price is also cannot be complained. Like this it’s natural that adventurers are gathering here."

The two of them got fed up with the crowd and got out.

Aria folded her hands behind her head.

"The people are fewer than Centralle but, it’s like they’re jam packed inside a cramped place. It looks like the business conditions suddenly get better. So something like this can actually happen."

While the two of them were walking on the street in front of the guild, they heard the voices of adventurers in dispute.

Adventurers were glaring at each other in the middle of the street.

Both sides had multiple people.

The group with fewer number was wearing good quality equipment and looked stronger.

On the other hand although the opposing group won in number, they were wearing similar equipment with bad quality.

"Aria, it seems to be a quarrel."

"Looks like it."

The strong looking adventurers yelled angrily toward the bigger group.

"Don’t say whatever you like! We’ve received permission from the guild!"

The bigger group’s leader retorted back.

"In this land there is this land’s rule. Don’t think that you can do whatever just because of the guild’s permission!"

It seemed the adventurers who came here due to the good business conditions were arguing with the adventurers who were born and raised here.

The residences of the city were passing through beside the rowdy groups while sending them irritated gaze.

This kind of commotion was becoming a daily occurrence due to the rapid increase of people.

"Annoying. The adventurers are fighting again."

"Hopefully they won’t get violent and destroy things."

"The merchants were also quarreling before this. Recently there’re a lot of quarrels everywhere it’s unpleasant."

The housewives were saying that while passing beside Aria and Sophia.

The two of them left from that place so they wouldn’t get dragged into the quarrel.

"There’re also a lot of problems even though the business is good."

Sophia sighed. Aria also agreed with her.

"Even if it’s profitable I won’t want to make this place my home base. Even though it’ll be better if we go to Beim right away, I wonder what Lyle is thinking."

The two of them headed to the inn—.

***

[Unpleasant thing is really standing out isn’t it?]

"We, well, is that so?"

The room of round table inside the Jewel.

By sending my consciousness inside the Jewel, I was able to have audience with the ancestors.

This was a mysterious place.

I was able to face the ancestors who didn't exist in reality and talked with them.

And then—it was also a place where I could watch their memory.

[In this world, if there is something then it's only natural for its good side and bad side to come out. Well, it's also a problem of subjectivity though.]

When the Third said that, the Fourth nodded deeply in agreement.

It seemed he had various things in mind.

[I understand. I really understand! They will be dissatisfied if everything stay the same like before, and yet when the method is changed and improved they will complain. In the first place there is no way a perfect score of one hundred can be reached, and yet even if result with the score of eighty is reached, they will criticize that the remaining twenty points isn't reached! It make you want to say, 'Then you try doing it yourself!'.]

The Fourth was agitated. His glasses was shining eerily more than usual.

Did something happen in the past?

The Third was slightly creeped out.

[E, err—yep, anyway the bad side is standing out.]

In the first place, if I had to say what we were talking about, it was the story of the guild that Aria and Sophia told us.

Even though Laukaan's business conditions were booming, there were various problems that this land seemed to be in trouble. That was what they said.

When the ancestors talked about it, it became like this.

The Third acted vigilant toward the agitated Fourth while continuing,

[It’s far better than the business conditions being bad though.]

"Then, Third think that we should ignore this situation and left Laukaan?"

[This and that are different. We will take the treasures.]

—Even though Laukaan Kingdom’s situation would worsen if the dungeon was destroyed, he didn’t sound guilty at all.

"Third, you have a really bad personality."

[Why is that? In the first place, this is only if there is a dungeon here. The possibility of that is high so we should find it quickly and destroy it. Isn’t it better rather than this whole region getting devastated? Lyle, aren’t you underestimating a dungeon’s rampage?]

A lot of my knowledge came from book.

I also recognized that a dungeon running wild was dangerous.

But, I didn’t have a real experience about that.

[Once a dungeon run wild, the people living in this area will all die without exception. Even if few of them luckily survive, they won’t be able to live in a land that has nothing. It’s still better for them to be poor. Eh? Was Laukaan originally poor?]

"I also don’t know much about that."

[Then, let’s investigate about it too from tomorrow.]

"I don’t mind that but—err, why was I called here?"

There were only the Third and the Fourth in the room of the round table.

The other three were apparently resting.

[No, actually there is something in our mind. You know, that thing behind Lyle’s seat.]

When I turned around, there was the memory room that appeared a little while ago—the door of the room that seemed to be connected to my memory.

From the perspective of the ancestors, they seemed to be feeling something unusual from it.

Even when we tried to investigate it, it was locked and couldn’t be opened.

"There won’t be anything interesting even if you watch my memory you know?"

[From our point of view it might be interesting. The lock—we think that it appear like this because it will open if something is done to it. Does Lyle have some idea? It’s fine even if it’s just your feeling, isn’t there anything, like a vague idea that it might open if you do this?]

"There isn’t anything like that."

Both the Third and the Fourth were disappointed because there was no clue.

[That’s unfortunate. Even though I’m thinking to watch Lyle’s memory and laugh.]

[I was looking forward to it though.]

These guys were horrible.

It couldn’t be helped that I thought the ancestors were like different people from that time they told me that I was splendid.

And then, the two of them were asking another thing on their mind.

[More importantly, how is the Jewel recently?]

I placed my hand on my forehead at the Third’s vague question.

"It’s not good. It often suddenly gets unstable."

The Fourth was also looking worried.

[The usual mana consumption is also not stable. You will need to be careful when using the silver weapons. Even so, why did it become this unstable—]

[I have an idea about it though.]

The two’s gaze turned toward my memory door.

If there was a clue, then surely it was my memory room.

Looking at the two who were deep in thought, I remembered one thing here. I was curious with the Fifth who was usually reliable. He was strangely quiet when talking about dungeon since coming to the eastern region.

"Say, what kind of person the Fifth is?"

[What kind? Isn’t he exactly like you see?]

Because the Third died in battle, he didn’t know much about his grandson the Fifth.

The Fourth muttered with a complicated look.

[In the past—he was a honest and adorable child though.]

The Third got interested hearing that.

[In the past huh. Now I'm also curious. The Fifth surely won't show his memory even if I ask him, so can we ascertain it using the Fourth's memory here?]

Even though the Third should have noticed that the Fourth was looking reluctant, he still said that he wanted to see the memory.

Usually he would be considerate and changed the topic here.

The Third who didn't do so was strange.

I too was curious about the Fifth.

Even though he was honest and adorable in the past, he changed complete as adult.

According to the Sixth, he treasured cute animals more than his own children. It was problematic as a father.

[Come on, just a little bit is fine so show me.]

[—It can't be helped.]

The Fourth was overwhelmed by the Third and stood up to head toward his memory room.

I and the Third followed behind.

***

It was the Fourth who was supporting the transition phase of Walt House.

At that time, Walt House that was a semi-baron house got promoted in rank due to the Third's achievement and became a baron house.

Nobles only got treated as real noble when their rank reached baron.

Until then Walt House was in the position of dependent where they received help from noble of higher status.

When they became baron house, Walt House became a caregiver that had to look after the semi-baron house and knight house.

Anyway, just think of it as the scale drastically got bigger.

The Fourth was the one supporting Walt House in such era.

The Fourth had no great deeds of arms, but he was the person who skillfully weather through the transition phase and created the foundation of Walt House in the future with his skill in domestic affair.

The Fourth had the hobby of saving money. It was his dream to fill his safe full with gold coin.

—Walt House’s mansion.

After the promotion to baron rank, the mansion until now became too small so it was being rebuilt to be a large mansion.

The inside of the mansion was flurried with the servants moving around.

"It’s noisy for some reason."

I followed behind the Fourth while watching the corridor.

There were few decorations. It was a plain mansion compared to the Walt House of the Seventh who was promoted to the rank of count.

Even if we touched the body of the passing people, they were passing through our body because they had no real body.

They were illusion.

[Could it be, there is childbirth?]

The Fourth responded to the Third's mutter.

[Yes, that's right. This is the day the Fifth was born.]

Why was he showing us this day?

While I was thinking that, the Third was looking happy.

"What's the matter?"

[Max is being considerate to me. You know, I didn't see my grandson's birth after all.]

I see, I understood. Then the Fourth denied it bashfully.

[I, it's not like I'm doing this for the Third's sake. It's in order to educate you two about Fredericks—about the Fifth.]

[Don't be shy. Even so, Walt House too had changed a lot.]

It seemed that the Third had various things in his mind, but when we arrived in one room—.

[Eh?]

Similar like the surprised Third, I also doubted my eyes.

"Thi, this is—"

It seemed the Fourth also understood what we wanted to say. He hid his face with his right hand while explaining.

[At that time I had no connection. It was difficult to search for a marriage partner. Above all else, there was those “precepts” so it was really difficult.]

Over there was the Fourth who was in the latter half of his thirty and—a completely exhausted girl lying on a bed.

Her red hair was sticking on her sweaty forehead. She was tired but showing a smile.

It seemed that this strong-willed looking girl had just given birth.

I was watching while wishing that there was a mistake. But then the Fourth inside the memory—Max was crying.

[Brigit, thank you. With this Walt House will be secured.]

The red haired girl’s response toward Max whose age was like her father was,

[Don’t cry. But, my mood is good today so I’ll give you seventy points. In deference to the cute “Fredericks”, I’ll refrain from reducing your point.]

It seemed that it wasn’t a mistake.

The red haired girl was Max’s wife.

The Third shook his head.

[—This is appalling.]

I also agreed.

"Fourth, I think this is a bit creepy. How far apart your age was with her?"

Then the Third tilted his head.

[Eh, that? In this case, shouldn’t you worried about whether the girl is able to endure the birth with her age?]

"Eh!?"

It seemed what I and the Third considered problematic was different.

I saw the difference in age as a problem but, the Third was worried whether the girl was in the age that was able to bear a child.

The Fourth sighed.

[There is no problem. Brigit was of age when she came to marry with me. She had small built since the beginning and with her physical appearance too she looked really young.]

The Third accepted it reluctantly.

[It’s fine if that’s the case.]

"Eh, it’s fine? Even though their age is like father and child!?"

[That’s not a problem. It’s a marriage of noble, so even the reversed pattern can happen. Having heir or not is an important matter, so age is also a concern to a certain degree though.]

The Fourth was also nodding, so it seemed I was the one mistaken here.

I couldn’t comprehend it.

[In the first place, it was really busy in my age. I had only just become a baron, so we were lacking manpower in many areas, and when it came to marriage the convenience is also different from before since I became a baron. In addition because of those precepts, I became 35 years old without being able to marry.]

Walt House had precepts that were created by the First who was drunk.

Because the person himself who created the precepts forgot, the First incurred the displeasure of the other six.

Right now it was one of the good memories but, the content of the precepts was—.

***

One, having excellent physical appearance.

Two, being healthy.

Three, having strong body.

Four, being smart.

Five, having beautiful skin.

***

—These five were added with the sixth "excelling in magic" at the era of the Fifth. Those were Walt House’s precepts for taking wife.

"Now that you mention it, it was the Fifth who added the sixth precepts."

The Fourth was turning his gaze to the baby Fredericks who had just been born and crying. His eyes looked sad somewhere.

[I didn’t want the precepts to be increased though. In the first place, I was thinking to get rid of the precepts themselves.]

And yet, Fredericks—the Fifth kept them and also increased them while he was at it.

Chapter 90 – The Fifth

The Fourth's memory room.

We who were looking for the Fifth's secret were watching the childhood of Fredericks.

Fredericks who became ten years old faced Brigit-san who was the Fourth's wife,

[Mo, mother.]

He called her like that as though to act more adult. Then, Brigit-san's eyes immediately became tearful.

[FREDERICKS BECAME A DELINQUEEENTT!]

She was seriously crying.

She wasn't pretending to cry, she was crying for real.

The Third seeing that was,

[Uwaaa~]

—He was appalled.

Fredericks returned to call Brigit-san as "mama" in panic.

[Mama, I'm sorry! Bu, but, saying mama feels strange somehow. I want to call mama using other word.]

[Mother is no good! Haha-ue also sounds like we're stranger! Any other word than those is also no good! I want Fredericks to call me mama!]

Brigit-san threw a tantrum like a kid. She had small build and on top of that she had a baby face. She looked like the big sister of the young Fredericks.

The troubled Fredericks dropped his shoulders dejectedly.

[I, I get it.]

Hearing that reply, Brigit-san immediately became all smile and hugged Fredericks tightly.

She was completely doting on him.

—I'm really jealous.

[The Fifth couldn't go against her. He didn't look like the type to call his mother with mama but, if it's like this there is no way he can go against her.]

The Third was laughing. The Fourth was looking happy—but, he replied with a conflicted expression that also looked sad.

[Fredericks is—the only child after all. Because of that too Brigit loved him a lot.]

The Third's face turned serious.

[Did something happen after she gave birth?]

[—She was injured. Brigit told me to take a mistress but, I couldn't accept it.]

[—I see.]

The scenery changed when the Third said that.

When I came to my senses the scene changed to the mansion's entrance. There Max and the servants were welcoming Brigit-san.

The Fourth bashfully said.

[Ah, this is the memory of our first meeting. It’s nostalgic.]

"Eh?"

When I wondered why he suddenly showed this, it seemed the memory room reacted to the Fourth’s mind that recalled this.

Brigit-san was a daughter of a viscount house, but it seemed that her house had declined greatly.

The servants who came with her were also few in number. She also had very few belonging.

But, she was bold.

On the other hand Max’s smile was twitching.

[E, err—are you Brigit-san?]

It seemed he got uneasy in front of Brigit-san who looked like a child.

Seeing that attitude, Brigit-san was—.

[Twenty points. Not knowing it’s me, the woman who’ll become your wife is a minus, but not being able to guess even with me standing in front of you like this is also a minus.]

[Ah, no, that was rude of me. You’re a very lovely young lady so—]

[Minus ten points. With this your score is ten points. I don’t need that kind of cheap flattery. You only saw me as a kid right?]

Max was overwhelmed.

The mansion’s servants were also the same.

Her attitude was amazing right from the start in the house that she would marry into, but she had something that backed such attitude.

[I'll become your wife, so I'll carry out my role. You don't need to worry about that.]

[I, I see.]

The Fourth was laughing seeing Max who was obviously dejected.

[Haha~, I was really worried about the future at that time.]

The Third came to a realization.

[The Fourth sometimes would score, x point! is you imitating your wife huh.]

[I was scored like that for many years that when I noticed that habit also infected me.]

Then the scenery was dyed grey—this time, a young Fredericks was playing in a room.

Max and Brigit-san were talking to Fredericks.

[Fredericks, are you having fun?]

[Yes!]

[H~m, as expected from my son! I can feel his good sense even from him playing with building blocks.]

Brigit-san hugged him while praising.

Fredericks looked pained.

[Mama, can't breathe.]

Max was also affectionate to him, but Brigit-san was doting to him even more than that.

The Third approached Fredericks and peered on his face.

[This kid will become the Fifth in the future? I can’t imagine it.]

We also watched the conversation after that but, Fredericks was certainly a honest and adorable child.

But, in the next memory—.

The time had passed a lot and Fredericks had turned adult.

His appearance was close to the current Fifth.

However, his atmosphere felt colder than even the Fifth.

Brigit-san who didn’t look older at all was introducing a girl to Fredericks.

[Fredericks, this girl is Chloe who I told you about before. Remember, I told you that she originated from the eastern region and she ended up being entrusted to us.]

Max who had white hair mixed among his hair now turned a sharp gaze toward Fredericks.

[How about saying something to her? You at least understand that this isn’t just a simple introduction right?]

The girl—Chloe-san was greatly perplexed seeing Fredericks glaring at her.

She had brown hair in bob cut style and lean figure.

In addition she was taller than Fredericks.

[Tha, that, do you hate a tall woman like me?]

It seemed Chloe-san had a complex with her tallness.

But, Fredericks didn’t look concerned with that.

[—Had you ever contracted any serious disease until now?]

His cold voice made even both Max and Brigit-san to look troubled.

Just what in the world had happened?

Chloe-san moved her gaze while answering Fredericks’s question.

It was as though she was being interrogated.

The atmosphere didn’t feel like marriage interview or introduction at all.

[N, no, never.]

[Your body also seem robust. The luster of your skin is also good.]

[I’m training so, this is normal I think.]

[You passed the precepts.]

The Third tilted his head wondering "Is it normal for a girl to be this trained?".

Even from my perspective, Chloe-san’s body looked like it was really well-trained.

The Fourth told us.

[Martial arts were popular in the east. Even a lot of the girls were also trained. This girl had full mastership of a certain school you know? Martial arts came to Walt House for real was around this time.]

I understood hearing that.

Her back was really straight even while sitting. And there was no sloppiness in her posture.

Fredericks faced that Chloe-san—.

[What about magic?]

[I’m a noble even like this, so I can use the basics.]

Fredericks stood up from his seat after hearing that.

[Wait!]

Max also stood up and tried to stop Fredericks but—.

[It’s a marriage interview right? I don’t mind. If you’re fine with someone like me, I’ll marry you anytime.]

—He then left the room.

It was as though he had no interest to marriage.

His behavior said that it didn’t matter who he married as long as they passed the precepts.

Max apologized to Chloe-san after Fredericks left.

[Sorry. Recently many things happened that he is also tired.]

[—It’s fine. Besides, this marriage proposal came from our side.]

The Fourth explained the situation of that time.

[It was a really dangerous period when the skirmish between territories at the eastern region got bigger. Even Walt House accepted the family of nobles that evacuated. Walt House at that time was quite developed. Because they wanted to ask for financial backing, there were many houses who tried to offer their daughter for marriage like this.]

The development was apparently due to the Fourth’s skill in domestic affairs in some part, but above everything else it seemed that field was also Brigit–san’s forte. The two of them combined their

strength and developed the territory. It was then they caught the eyes of the nobles of the eastern region.

The Fourth told us that some houses wanted to marry their daughter into Walt House to ask for support from Walt House.

[For the sake of their husband, father, brother who fought in the east—the families who evacuated to here were also desperate.]

Chloe-san had no option of refusing.

No, as long as Fredericks didn’t refuse, then this talk had been decided.

The Third put his hand on his chin.

[Don’t you know what happened?]

To that question the Fourth was,

[Please ask for the rest to the person himself. But, Fredericks was a kind child. I showed you two this memory because I want you to know about that.]

***

—Laukaan Kingdom’s palace.

The king who listened to the report of the attacked dungeon was unconsciously gripping the armchair of the chair he was sitting on.

He reflexively raised his waist from the chair and leaned forward.

Before long the king opened his eyes wide and asked with a smile.

"There is no mistake that a divine beast was sighted then!?"

The knight who had conspicuous trace of medical treatment on his body continued his report with a bad complexion.

"Ye, yes. My subordinate saw it. It was a beautiful beast with white scales and golden horn. Thinking of how it spoke with human language, I believe that it was unmistakably a divine beast."

There were some reasons that qilin was called as divine beast int this world.

One reason was that qilin fought against monster.

And then, it was also known that they wouldn’t harm human indiscriminately.

It was also said that qilin would destroy dungeon that was hard to be subjugated by human.

It was a beneficial beast for human.

And the beast was also a sign of good luck.

It was to a degree that there was legend that someone who was recognized by a divine beast would surely obtain success.

Qilin’s legend was a type of such legend. It was considered as a symbol of success.

However, the chief vassal standing beside the king was flustered by the report.

"Your majesty, at this rate all the dungeons in this country will be discovered by the divine beast. If we’re careless then our plan from here on will be greatly affected."

For Laukaan that was hiding dungeons, they would be troubled if the dungeons were destroyed.

The king spat "I know that" at the chief vassal and began to think while massaging his chin.

After a while,

"Perhaps it’s a good omen that a qilin appeared in this country."

"Your majesty?"

"We’ll be able to obtain qilin. —Don’t you think it’s suitable for me who will become the leader of the alliance?"

The chief vassal who noticed the king’s thinking was making a troubled face.

He was unable to fully agree with the king.

"It’s said that it’s difficult to obtain qilin. If we offend it, we don’t know what kind of disaster will occur."

"Don’t be a coward. A qilin came at this important time. Rather we should think of it as a good omen."

The king set aside the opinion of the careful chief vassal and stood up. He then gave the order.

"Capture the qilin! Mobilize the whole knights and soldiers. Use the adventurers too. Use even the people. Announce that the one who can capture the qilin will be given any reward they want!"

They could obtain a qilin.

For the sake of that, the king decided to exert all his strenght—.

***

It was noisy the next day.

"It’s really bustling since the morning."

I who went into the city to gather information took notice of the crowd at the plaza.

Novem who was standing beside me also noticed that the situation of the surrounding was different from yesterday.

"There is commotion at the center of the plaza."

It seemed there was something at the plaza, but we couldn’t see anything due to the thick crowd in our way.

Then Sophia tapped my shoulder.

"Lyle-dono, please leave it to me!"

"—Eh?"

Today I was going with Novem and Sophia since the morning.

It was appreciated that these two didn’t have any strained atmosphere between them.

They were a combination that was kind to my stomach.

Sophia turned her back on me and crouched down.

"Here!"

"No, here you say—I’m troubled even if you said that."

Sophia turned her face to me and,

"It’s a shoulder ride. By doing that, Lyle-dono will be able to see the center of the plaza."

What to do—I wanted to refrain from doing that a lot.

"I, I’m fine."

"What are you saying? This is necessary in order to learn what is going on. Come on, please get on quickly. Weight won’t be any problem at all with my Art."

Sophia had an Art that could change the weight of what she touched.

While she was a girl, she was able to lift up a man like me.

"That’s not what I mean—"

I wanted to say that it was embarrassing but, Sophia forcefully started to shoulder me.

"It’s fine, please quickly get on!"

My resistance ended in vain and I was lifted up. The surrounding gazes gathered on me.

But, thanks to that my field of vision became high and I could see the center of the plaza.

"I, it’s embarrassing."

Novem was looking up at me who was being given shoulder ride.

"Lyle-sama—you look wonderful even while being given shoulder ride."

I didn’t feel happy even if she told me that with a considerate smile.

"Novem, don’t made such forced praise. It makes me felt even more embarrassed."

"My apologies. I too thought that perhaps that posture is a bit agonizing though."

The Fourth spoke while I was feeling embarrassed from doing shoulder ride on Sophia.

[Riding on a girl’s shoulders—no, rather than that let’s investigate what is going on right now instead. Lyle, can you see something?]

I returned my gaze to the plaza’s center at that.

"There is a bulletin board."

The gathered people were looking at the notification with intense concentration.

The people who couldn’t read were listening the detail from people who could.

[Bulletin board? Is it some kind of important news?]

The Sixth showed interest. Even so I couldn’t read because it was too far.

I talked to Sophia.

Because she was giving me shoulder ride, my calf was touching her big breast.

I also felt that it was a bit of a shame but, it was embarrassing to be watched like this by the surrounding even now.

"It’s enough."

"Do you learn something?"

"I only learned that there is a bulletin board there."

If there was a bulletin board then we could check it later.

After I asked her to put me down, Novem noticed Eva approaching here while pushing through the crowd.

"Why are you doing shoulder ride? Thanks to that I can find you easily though."

Eva who was running out of breath was looking around for me it seemed.

"Qilin! A qilin appeared they said! And, it looks like they’re gathering even the adventurers in order to capture the qilin."

I was surprised hearing about qilin. Then the Fifth spoke out.

[—Qilin huh. I wonder if that fellow is doing well.]

His voice sounded somewhat nostalgic and happy.

***

When we returned to the inn, Eva gathered everyone.

Several beds were lined up inside the room. The gap between beds was narrow. This room felt like it was narrating the situation of Laukaan that was crowded with people.

The number of visitors were too many compared to the number of rooms.

Also, the cost of staying for a night was expensive too.

Even so we used the inn because it was dangerous to sleep outside.

However, Damian was sleeping in Dump Car that was parked outside.

Because Lily-san was taking care of Damian, the two of them weren’t here.

Dump Car was big, but it was filled to the brim with Damian’s belonging that everyone couldn’t stay there.

Shannon was complaining in a bad mood.

"Isn’t this a bit horrible? The performance of a traveling troupe will be starting after this. Even though I was looking forward to it since yesterday."

She was angry that she suddenly got called back.

"How nice it is that you’re free like this."

When I said that, Shannon kicked at my knee.

When I took a step back to dodge, Shannon gritted her teeth.

"It should be fine to enjoy myself with my pocket money!"

"I’m not saying that it’s bad. Don’t be grumpy."

When I made fun of her, Miranda scolded us as though she was rebuking small children.

"Enough the two of you. Eva is making a scary face there."

Eva objected with a pout.

"I’m not! More importantly I want to confirm about this properly. You all, how much do you know about qilin?"

Aria answered.

"Qilin right? Isn’t it the goddess’s messenger, or a beast of fortune, or something?"

Sophia also nodded.

"I heard that it’s a type that is often seen among the divine beasts. I never see one before but, I once heard that you can become a hero if a qilin follow you."

Shannon tilted her head and asked.

"Eh? It’s not a monster that doesn’t do anything bad?"

It seemed Shannon didn’t understand so Clara explained to her simply.

"They aren’t monster but divine beast. Even among the divine beasts, it is said that qilin is an existence that is the closest to us human. The number it is witnessed is also a lot, and among them there is also people who got liked by qilin. Many of those people obtain success, so it’s said that qilin is a divine beast that bring luck."

Shannon nodded with deep interest.

"That’s nice. If it’s me then surely I will get liked. Though Lyle looks like he’ll get hated."

"What did you say!"

She provoked me so I was going to retort back, but Miranda stopped me.

"Lyle too, don’t be angry. More importantly, qilin is also important for nobles. It’s said that it’s a good omen if qilin is seen before a war, and it’s said that a territory with qilin will surely become prosperous. A lot of nobles would try to capture one even if they have to sacrifice a lot."

Novem was listening to those stories silently.

Monica asked in deep interest while,

"So in conclusion, it’s a beast that is like a lump of good fortune? More importantly, divine beast—in this continent there are faiths to multiple goddesses, so the messengers of those goddesses are divine beasts? So that’s why Laukaan Kingdom is searching for a qilin desperately."

The Fifth who was listening to our talk made an exasperated voice.

[You all only know about rumors at most.]

Did he know something about qilin?

When I was going to ask, Eva raised her voice first.

"All of you don’t know anything!"

She yelled angrily. We shut our mouth. Eva showed a serious face to us.

She put her hand on her waist,

"Qilin or divine beasts are really strong and smart. They can easily defeat even troublesome monster. They’re also destroying the

dungeons that showed up in a place that cannot be entered by human."

Miranda understood.

"Certainly there is a lot of story of noble having the table turned on them when they tried to capture one forcefully."

It seemed it was difficult to capture one.

"Then, there is no problem I guess. I thought that it would be pitiful if it get captured forcefully but, it feels like it will be fine even if we leave this alone from Eva's story."

If it was Qilin then it felt like it would be able to struggle through this difficulty by its own strength.

Then Novem turned toward me with a troubled face.

"Lyle-sama, what Eva-san want to say is the part where a qilin is "destroying dungeon". The smart qilin is deliberately taking action so human discover it, isn't there a considerable reason behind it?"

Eva agreed with Novem's opinion.

"Perhaps there are a lot of dungeons here or a dangerous dungeon that is in the verge of running wild? It'll be nice if it's finished subjugating dungeon and return back already but—it'll be dangerous if that's not the case."

Shannon didn't look interested.

"But it's a beast right? It wasn't just accidentally appearing in front of human?"

"Divine beast understand human language. I said that they are smart right? They might be smarter than Shannon right now."

Shannon was angry hearing Eva saying that, but it seemed she got slightly interested hearing that divine beast could understand human language.

"Hey, could it be, we can understand what animal said if a qilin translate for us? I can sense an animal’s emotion but, as expected I can’t understand their words so I’m interested."

The surrounding was looking at the excited Shannon with an exasperated look.

I also felt the same.

I felt the same but—.

[—Shannon, so you also noticed that. You realized that.]

There was one person inside the Jewel who was in admiration.

It was the animal lover the Fifth.

[He started again.]

The Sixth’s displeased voice came.

[Lyle, the talk won’t progress like this, so ignore it and listen to Eva’s story.]

The Fourth told me. I turned my gaze to Eva.

Eva noticed and resumed her explanation.

"Anyway! —A qilin is intentionally showing up, so there must be something in this country. Also, the saying htat qilin won’t harm human is a lie."

"Eh, it’s a lie!?"

Shannon was surprised.

Aria also slightly opened her eyes wide.

"But it’s a divine beast right?"

"Stupid. If its life get threatened or it looks like it’ll get captured then it will resist. It will become a disaster if the powerful qilin rampage even just for a bit. Also, if it gets angry then it will be out of hand."

In respond to Eva’s explanation, Sophia was,

"Have you seen it directly?"

"—I, I once saw qilin flying."

When she was traveling, she happened to see several qilin running in the sky.

In other words, she never angered any qilin.

She also never saw a qilin rampaging.

Clara stabbed at where it hurt for Eva.

"The credibility of information from the exaggerating elf is low."

"I, it’s really dangerous! We can’t provoke a qilin! If a qilin really get captured by accident, its comrades might come and rampage!"

Sophia recalled an information regarding qilin.

"But, this time they said that there was only one qilin that was witnessed wasn’t it?"

"Pe, perhaps it has comrades somewhere around."

Aria turned a doubtful gaze toward Eva.

"You always exaggerate your story, so it’s really hard to believe no matter what."

The place’s atmosphere was getting complicated.

This was information of elf that liked to exaggerate their story.

Furthermore, Eva heard this story from another elf too so it was troubling.

The possibility that the story was embellished was higher.

Perhaps the truth was different?

Everyone harbored such doubt.

Then the Fifth’s voice came from inside the Jewel.

[She isn’t wrong but, it seems she don’t know about the story in detail. Lyle, qilin isn’t a god’s messenger. At the very least, the qilin themselves aren’t thinking so.]

The way the Fifth spoke, it was as though he heard it from the person themselves—from a qilin.

[It’s dangerous that there is only one qilin. It might has just become independent. Besides, it’s also curious that it showed itself. Investigate about the qilin too while you are gathering information. Find it earlier than anybody else.]

Were we going to capture it? When I was thinking that,

[Stupid idiot! Obviously it’s to let it escape. —It’s pitiful.]

The Fifth said that it was pitiful.

[This shitty father.]

The sixth spat out with a click of his tongue.

This must be that. The Fifth’s air of animal lover was coming out.

He wanted to help the qilin regardless of whether it would be profitable or not.

The Third made a suggestion to change the atmosphere.

[It'll be great if we can ask it for help in defeating Celes though. If it's so smart it can understand human language, it might be good to try talking to it. It'll be lucky if we help it out.]

The Fourth got on the idea.

[Good idea. Even in case it's no good, it will be the best if we can make it indebted to us by saving it.]

The Seventh was also similarly,

[It will be the best if we can make it follow Lyle. I'm also curious what kind of person will be liked by a qilin. Does the Fifth know something?]

The Fifth who was addressed raised his voice into an angry yell which was unusual for him.

[You guys aren't human!]

Hearing those words, the Sixth who usually could do nothing except getting criticized snapped back.

[THAT'S RICH COMING FROM YOUUUU!!]

It became noisy inside the Jewel, so I told Eva I was going outside before going to the corridor.

I couldn't even talk in this kind of state.

Even so, qilin—I heard that the Fifth had a tie with one but, what kind of tie could it be?

.

Inside the Jewel.

The Sixth who seemed to be in a quarrel with the Fifth was really looking ragged.

His clothes were messy and there was even a bruise on his face.

He must got punched by the Fifth.

[That bastard, I absolutely won’t forgive him.]

I who was welcomed with an expression that was oozing out anger ran my gaze around the room of the round table.

There was only the sixth there.

"What was wrong today?"

[Oops, that’s right. I thought that you would be concerned. I’ll show you my memory.]

"The Sixth’s memory?"

[About the qilin—and also, about the Fifth. You’re curious right?]

I would be lying if I said I wasn’t curious.

"Err—yes."

[Then come with me. I’ll tell you what kind of man that shitty bastard was.]

He put his hand on my shoulder and we entered into the memory room.

Chapter 91 – As a Father

[Answer me! Are those vermin more important than us!?]

The young SIxth—Fiennes was yelling angrily at the Fifth, Fredericks whose white hair was starting to stand out.

But, Fredericks was taking care of the animals dressed in a way that was unthinkable for a noble.

The place was—Walt House's mansion.

A part of the garden was surrounded with fence where the animals were let free to move. There was even a shed for the sake of the animals.

Fredericks who was wearing fatigues that was easy to move in was piling up dried grass.

[—It has nothing to do with you.]

When Fredericks answered like that, Fiennes grabbed at him.

[It has everything to do with me! You're sending my little brothers and little sisters all over the place for political marriage, and are you going to keep only these vermin on your side huh!?]

It looked like the result would be clear if the huge Fiennes and the small Fredericks fought each other.

However, Fredericks easily threw away Fiennes with martial art.

Fredericks looked down on Fiennes.

His eyes were really cold.

[Your training is insufficient. If you’re free than go sweat some in the training ground.]

Fredericks said that before resuming his work. Fiennes didn’t say anything back and stood up before leaving the animal shed while gritting his teeth.

Then, the scenery was dyed in grey color and all movements stopped.

The Sixth folded his arms while,

[What do you think? Irritating right?]

"This is a bit horrible. Or rather, was there something that happened?"

When I asked for more detail, many horrible stories about the Fifth came out.

[Lyle, do you know how many brothers and sisters I had?]

"I don’t know the precise number."

[There were 36 including me.]

"—Eh?"

I was surprised that there was that many.

[Including my mother, he got five wives in total both legal wife and concubines. The Fifth wanted a lot of children. What’s more he wanted them to be used as political tool.]

It seemed it had been decided where the many children would go to since they were born.

Most of the boys would be taken into another house as son-in-law, while sometimes they would also be made to become independent.

Regarding the girls, all of them married into other houses.

Perhaps it couldn’t be helped but, all of those marriages were political marriage.

"Eh, but, that—it was different with Milleia-san wasn’t it?"

Milleia-san—the great grandmother of Miranda and Shannon came from Walt House. She was also the Sixth’s little sister.

Regarding Milleia-san, it should be the head of Circry House who was asking for her hand in marriage.

[Certainly it was because the man said he wanted to marry Milleia. But, the house of Miranda and Shannon is a viscount house in the capital. It’s also a fact that it was convenient for Walt House. Besides, Milleia was blind.]

If her hand wasn’t asked for marriage, she would be made to marry into a house that was convenient for Walt House anyway.

The Sixth said that and watched the animals inside the scenery that was dyed grey.

"Dog, cat, horse—there are a lot."

[That shitty father was indulgent toward animals after all. He was making a face that he never showed even toward his family. I hated him when I was a child seeing that.]

He made use of his children thoroughly for the sake of the house.

But, he was showing his soft side only toward animals.

I thought that it was horrible even just from listening like this, so who knew how great the anger inside Fiennes who was right in the middle of it.

"—Does the Sixth, hate the Fifth even now?"

The Sixth scratched his head.

[I don’t know. Because there are also the things that I learned later on.]

The expression of the Sixth was complicated.

[He was affectionate to the animals rather than to us. There was even a time that I envied them when I was a child.]

"Err, his wives didn’t say anything about it?"

[They didn’t say anything. No, based from what I know, I didn’t think that they said anything.]

Speaking of the Fifth’s wives, his legal wife and concubines were woman from the eastern region of Bahnseim Kingdom.

Because there was the circumstance how they married into Walt House in exchange of their house receiving support, perhaps they were unable to say their opinion strongly.

I thought that was also a horrible situation.

[Now then, next is]

The Sixth raised his face and the surrounding scenery started to be colored.

There was a slight change to the animal shed.

The animals inside the shed changed, and then a voice could be heard from inside.

It was the voice of the Fifth talking to the animals.

His voice was really kind.

[Mei, are you already fine? —I see, that’s great.]

When I peered inside, over there was—.

"That’s a strange horse."

[Wrong—that’s a qilin.]

There was a filly there with white scale and gold mane.

The Sixth said that it was a qilin.

"Eh, but it don’t have any horn."

[It can put in and out its horn freely. Normally it will keep it hidden and when it’s being wary it will let out its horn. When I came near, this fellow always let out its horn.]

Because there was a wound on its neck, the filly had bandage wrapped around its neck—the small qilin was fawning on Fredericks.

It rubbed its forehead on him, demanding to be patted.

Fredericks had aged quite much compared to the one in the memory just now.

But, he had a very kind expression.

It was a face that even I never saw before.

[Pops—the Fifth had mellowed a lot but, he wouldn’t show this kind of face even inside the Jewel. He really love animal more than his children.]

"That’s—"

[Yeah, I’m being sarcastic. —Forget I said that.]

The relationship of the Fifth and the Sixth couldn’t be simply said as good.

Right now I thought that they were in a relationship that recognized each other but—there was also deeply rooted matter between them.

After a while, Fiennes entered the shed.

Because he had grown compared to before, I could feel that several years had passed since the previous memory.

[Pops, a letter came from the palace. Looks like they really want to take a look at the qilin that Walt House obtained.]

The qilin hid behind Fredericks hearing those words.

A small golden horn was going out from its forehead.

I looked at the Sixth,

"You're really hated."

[It can't be helped. After all I and the rest of the family were considering it as tool somewhere inside. It was only pops who purely loved it.]

Riches and fame—qilin symbolized good fortune. Many people tried to approach them because of that.

The Sixth and his family at that time also weren't exception to that.

But, the young qilin didn't become emotionally attached to anyone other than Fredericks.

[At that time many nobles, merchants, and various other people came uninvited demanding to be shown the qilin. Pops turned away all of them though.]

But, when the request came from the palace it couldn't be easily refused.

Fredericks made a serious face.

Fiennes snorted seeing Fredericks like that.

[They’re going to tell you to present that qilin anyway, so start preparing to hand it over. I’m looking forward how much compensation we’ll get from a single qilin.]

His insinuation toward Fredericks was filled with various negative emotions.

The Sixth looked slightly ashamed watching his young self.

[At this time—I was still, didn’t know anything. I didn’t even consider pops’ feeling.]

"His feeling?"

[Pops also had various circumstances. But, I myself also harbor dissatisfaction at him. It’s complicated.]

The Sixth said that he still couldn’t sort out his feeling and watched his young self.

[If only, he told me sooner.]

With those words as the trigger, the surrounding scenery subtly changed again.

This was the third memory just in this animal shed.

The third time looked like not much time had passed since the second memory.

And then, there was nothing at the spot where the qilin was at.

Fredericks was only cleaning the shed.

Fiennes entered there and yelled.

[—You let the qilin escape got away huh!]

Fredericks stopped his cleaning work and turned toward Fiennes.

[What about it? I'll make an excuse at the palace. If something happen it'll be my responsibility. You've nothing to complain with that right?]

[You're going to protect it until that far? You who thought of the house as more important than anything else—you're going to do something that harm the house just for the sake of an animal without batting an eyelid? You're a failure as a house head—no, a failure of a father.]

Fredericks smiled at Fiennes's words.

It wasn't the kind smile he directed toward animal, but a shadowed scary smile.

[You only noticed that now?]

Fiennes attacked but, he was manhandled by Fredericks easily once more.

The Sixth didn't look weak.

It was the Fifth that was strong.

"The Fifth is strong isn't he?"

[Hm? Aa, I guess. It seems he got taught various things by mothers. I heard there was a time when he was desperate to become strong. After this I also trained seriously. I'll win if we fight now.]

The surrounding scenery vanished as though it was washed away by wind. When I noticed we were in the room of the round table.

The Sixth stood in front of me.

[Now then, this is my memory. What do you think, he’s a horrible guy right?]

The Sixth was also horrible but, certainly the Fifth was also horrible.

He should be a bit—I thought that it would be fine if he directed kindness toward his family.

[The Fifth was knowledgeable about qilin is also because he had actually looked after one. He is concerned perhaps is also—he’s recalling that fellow he looked after in the past.]

Fredericks gave a name to the qilin.

If I remembered right—was it Mei?

He was really affectionate to it.

The Sixth patted my head.

My hair got messed up, and he was doing it strongly that it felt slightly hurt.

"Wha, what is it?"

[Just, feel like it. Don’t become like the Fifth. After that, I think it’s impossible but don’t become like me too. It’ll be better if you get along with your wives—with everyone.]

"No, what is it so suddenly?"

[That’s why, I just feel like it.]

"I won’t become like the Sixth!"

[Liar! You’re already keeping that many women! Even I only kept three, and yet you’re already surpassing me if it’s only in number!]

The Sixth laughed and patted my head. I escaped from him and returned my consciousness from the Jewel to reality.

***

It was still dark when I opened my eyes.

I opened my eyes on the inn’s bed and passed the time for a while doing nothing.

The morning and evening was still cold.

The whole party members were sleeping in this room where it felt like beds were crammed in as much as possible into a single room.

I was sleeping in the same room with girls but, it somehow felt awkward to be the only man.

"I’m jealous with Damian who is living in his Dump Car."

It was only chilly on the skin but, it was hard to get out of the blanket with my sleep-addled head.

I wanted to sleep once more like this but, I also couldn’t do that.

Today we were going to gather information again.

We would investigate the reason how Laukaan Kingdom’s business condition became better while investigating about the qilin too.

While thinking that, a voice came from the Jewel that I placed beside the bed.

It was the Fifth.

[Lyle, how long you’re going to stay half-asleep? Get up quickly and prepare. You have to investigate about the qilin after all.]

Everyone was asleep, but when I started preparing Monica who was sleeping while standing opened her eyes.

The outside was still dark, but the sun would show up before long.

When I yawned, I heard the Fourth and the Fifth talking.

[Shouldn’t investigating Laukaan Kingdom be prioritized?]

[They’re hiding dungeon anyway. A qilin came is the proof. That’s why, it’s better to prioritize the qilin.]

[Aren’t you forgetting the plan to obtain the dungeon’s treasure?]

[In the first place, if there is only a single dungeon here, the qilin won’t deliberately appear openly. Perhaps there is a dangerous dungeon, or perhaps the number of dungeon is many—we will reach the dungeon if we follow after the qilin.]

The Third concluded the talk.

[Then, won’t it be better to search for the hidden dungeon? I think we’ll be able to meet the qilin like that.]

The Fifth sounded dissatisfied,

[That can also work.]

He said and then fell silent.

I could hear the Sixth’s clicking tongue. It was noisy since the morning.

"—Guess I’ll do my best today too."

Monica immediately opened her eyes when I started moving.

Her red eyes were shining inside the dark room. It was slightly scary.

"Good morning, chicken dickwad! I'll immediately do the morning preparation. Oops, I forgot the daily morning kiss. Now, let's kiss with Monica!"

"There isn't any daily routine like that."

"It's fine to start it from today. Let's kiss with Monica in order to begin the first step starting from today!"

"Don't wanna."

"Your tension is low since the morning. If a boy in his puberty get approached by a beautiful girl like Monica, it won't be strange for their heart to pound hard."

Monica who was making joke loudly was high-tensioned since the morning.

Eva got up in a flash hearing that voice and moved her neck to look around.

Her eyes were half opened. Her bed-hair was in horrible state.

Her mood was bad from waking up.

"—It's noisy. Be quiet."

Then she covered herself until her head with her blanket and slept again. I talked with a small voice in consideration of her.

"I got scolded. This is your fault Monica."

"I have no concern to the riff-raff who isn't chicken dickwad, so this can't be helped. More importantly, what to do for the breakfast?"

Although the inn set up a price that was relatively high, the service here was bad.

We could ask for hot water to be prepared, but they didn’t offer meal.

"There is also no place to cook, so we’ll eat somewhere."

Several of my companions were stirring restlessly on their bed.

Everyone would wake up soon at this time.

"This inn’s service is really bad. Putting that aside, what is chicken dickwad’s plan today?"

I got out of my bed and stretched while answering.

"Information gathering."

***

—Laukaan Kingdom’s adventurer guild.

Aria and Sophia asked around there. They were talking with a man who came from other place.

"Qilin? I’m not interested with it."

They tried bringing up qilin in exchange of greeting, but the man didn’t look interested.

"Why’s that? I heard that the reward is extraordinary."

Aria asked the man back.

"That’s because there are a ton of dark rumors about that kind of quest since the past. Imagine that you capture the qilin and presented it. If the nobles killed the one who captured it, then their objective is accomplished while they also don’t have to pay any reward. It’s nothing but profit for them."

Sophia was bewildered while,

"Isn’t that, overthinking it too negatively?"

"You’ll live longer by being careful like this. While the others are absorbed with the qilin, I’ll earn money steadily."

Aria and Sophia looked at each other and nodded before entering the main topic.

"Hey, more importantly have you heard about the rumor of hidden dungeon?"

"That’s a popular rumor. Laukaan’s hidden dungeon. Do you know something about it?"

Aria handed a golden coin. The man accepted it secretly without being noticed by the surrounding.

The man moved only his eyes to watch the surrounding warily while answering.

"—It’s better if you two don’t sniff around. The rumors about it are circulating around but, I know some guys who investigated it and vanished. Though if I’m asked whether the dungeon really exist or not, I think it exist."

The man taught them the things that he noticed after coming to Laukaan Kingdom.

There was area with increasing presence of monster recently.

There was a rumor that the dungeon wasn’t only one.

After finishing talking about the rumors,

"I’ll head to Beim with my companions after earning some amount of money. After all this isn’t a place you want to stay around for long. If the rumors are true, then the dungeons might rampage. You two, be careful too."

The man said that and left the two—.

***

—Bar.

Even though it wasn’t the operating time, Miranda entered inside and talked.

She sat on the counter and drank her beverage.

The tables had the seats placed on them while a waiter was cleaning the floor.

The master warned the young waiter who kept glancing at Miranda.

"You can clean the floor later. Go clean outside."

"Ye, yes."

The waiter who looked somewhat unreliable had his eyes hidden by his unkempt long hair.

He went outside the bar in hurry and stumbled. He fell down outside.

The master sighed.

"I hired him recently but, I don’t understand whether that guy is usable or not."

The middle aged master grew beard and his stomach was really big.

Thick arms could be seen from his rolled up sleeves.

Miranda resumed talking.

"Looks like the business situation in this country is booming."

"—It’s from around ten years ago. Outsiders are now coming here. It becomes unpleasant with so many people everywhere. This bar is also losing the regular customer. Instead adventurers who look like thug are coming. It’s bothersome."

It seemed the master wasn’t thinking well of the current situation.

Miranda kept talking with him to listen about the situation in more detail.

"That’s troubling. Is there anything else?"

"Things like the increase of price and so on, but there is a lot of the most suspicious rumor."

"Rumor? Is it about qilin?"

"This isn’t about that auspicious creature. Do you know about the alliance of countries? It’s an alliance that is assembled from the countries around here but, there is no alliance leader. Anyway, even though it’s called alliance but it’s only a gathering of countries with nothing getting decided by them,"

There was no country with strength that could lead the assembled countries.

The master grumbled that if their neighbor wasn’t a large country like Bahnseim, the alliance would be dissolved for sure.

"These countries quarreled with Bahnseim, but there are also many skirmished within the alliance itself. Well, it seems that this situation is the same no matter what is the country though. The merchants who came from Beim also said it. There is also an alliance that assembled the small countries around there too. —I heard that there is also a lot of war there."

Miranda looked disheartened.

"What an unpleasant story isn’t it? And?"

"His majesty introduced himself as candidate to be that leader. Thanks to that there is rumor that this time’s battle won’t end with just skirmish."

Laukaan’s king introduced himself to be the alliance leader.

The neighboring countries didn’t accept that.

Certainly it was problematic.

The master said to Miranda.

"You’re also an adventurer who come to search for the dungeon right?"

"You know?"

"People who come here are all like that after all."

"It’s not certain that there is dungeon right?"

"It’ll be stranger if there’s none. Because of that there’s also rumor that the neighboring countries are getting impatient too. They suspected that perhaps this country is hiding a dungeon and making it run wild. The business is good but, it’s uneasy to live in a place where you don’t know when monsters will come swarming."

Hearing the master’s true feeling, Miranda broached the main topic.

"People say that qilin will destroy dungeon. If that qilin come, then it will destroy the dungeon for us."

"That’s not certain. If that story is true, then it’s strange that there are countries that got destroyed by dungeon running wild in the

past. If the qilin will take care of dungeon then I hope it do it thoroughly."

"Do you know something? Like the place where the dungeon might be located?"

"—The rumors say that the area with increasing number of monster is suspicious but, recently there are a lot of monsters everywhere. But, yesterday a customer said that the monsters in the south decreased. Perhaps the qilin appeared there."

Hearing that, Miranda thought that there was possibility if it was at direction other than south.

"Thank you. I'm leaving."

Miranda placed the information fee. The master took it and smiled.

"I'll tell you one last thing. The soldiers and knights are the one managing the dungeon. Perhaps those with debt will talk easily."

The master said that and taught Miranda the bar where knights and soldiers often visited.

Surely that place would sell information toward customers who came searching information about dungeon in order to earn small change.

However, Miranda didn't trust that information easily.

She said thanks outwardly and left the bar.

"Now then, can he be trusted or not—"

She sensed that she was tailed after she left the bar.

That was why, she walked for a while before entering a small path that was formed between the lined up buildings.

She walked until the dead end of the back alley and turned around.

"Waiter-san, how about you come out soon?"

When Miranda said that in that place that seemed to be empty, the bar’s waiter showed himself while scratching his head in embarrassment.

"You noticed?"

His eyes were hidden by his forelock like before but, he was smiling.

He didn’t carry any weapon.

But, Miranda drew out her weapon without hesitation.

Then, the man lifted both his hands in front of his chest and began to look flustered.

"Stop that miss! I don’t have any intention to harm you."

"—I’ll kill you if you make any strange movement."

Miranda didn’t let her guard down. The man revealed his identity to her.

"You heard it just now right? That the neighboring countries are being troubled by Laukaan. I’m like a spy from there so to speak."

The man said that and warned Miranda.

"That master looks like he is selling information about dungeon, but that’s only at the surface. He plans to sell you out to the knights and soldiers. He is connected to them behind closed door."

"That seems likely. But, I also don’t know whether you’re saying the truth or not."

"I myself am waiting for those who seem strong. No matter what you say my homeland is in danger. There is no way I can let a dungeon run wild."

After Miranda thought for a bit, she told the man.

"I'll let you meet our leader. We'll make decision there."

The man was slightly perplexed.

Even though he thought that he would be doubted, he was taken by surprise that he was being believed.

Miranda made a deliberate movement of putting her left hand forward and threw something toward the man.

"Oops"

It was just a rock but—because the man caught it, his gaze went away from Miranda for a moment.

Without delay Miranda produced string from her hand and jumped to the rooftop.

When the man's gaze returned, Miranda's figure wasn't there anymore.

"I'll come to pick you up. —It's useless even if you run away."

The man who was left behind was sweating coldly seeing Miranda vanishing instantly—.

***

Night.

The man who I met with Miranda wasn't harboring hostility toward us.

But, perhaps the man was wary toward us. The Sixth’s Art was showing the color yellow—a color that meant he wasn’t ally or enemy.

Even using Shannon’s mystic eyes, it looked like the man didn’t intend to harm us.

After confirming that, we invited him to a room inside an inn where we could talk without getting bothered by anyone else.

The man who was sitting in front of me looked nervous.

Inside the Jewel,

[Miranda is really unbelievable. How did she find someone like this?]

The Seventh was puzzled.

[This too must be because of her habitual good behavior. After all Miranda is Milleia’s great grandson!]

The Sixth who favored Miranda praised her feat.

I looked at the man while,

"Let’s hear what you have to say."

"Yeah, let’s."

It seemed the man was bewildered, but his atmosphere was firm when the talk began.

"First I want to confirm this. There is no mistake that your group’s objective is to destroy dungeon is it?"

When I nodded, the man continued in relief.

"That’s good. We can cooperate with each other. First, I’ll tell you the general locations that my side has grasped. But, if possible I want you to destroy the dungeons only after the locations of all the dungeons has been found out."

"As I thought, there are more than one."

"Yes. There is no doubt of that based on our investigation. We also investigated the places where the knights and soldiers often sent in rotation. But, we don’t know the precise locations."

Sophia interrupted our talk.

It seemed she was doubting the man who looked frivolous and unreliable. Her voice was hard.

"Your group don’t investigate that?"

"We won’t be troubled if we can do that. The knights and soldiers of this country are guarding the dungeons. It will be a big problem if foreigner like me is found out snooping around. But, right now is a good time."

Aria seemed to notice.

"You mean the qilin?"

"That! They’re splitting manpower to search for qilin, so the security should be thinner. In fact, there are a lot of knights and soldiers coming back."

This person looked unreliable, but it seemed he had unexpectedly investigated a lot.

I faced the man.

"If that’s the case won’t it be better to search it yourself?"

"Gathering information in the city and exploring the fields are different. There was another group in charge of that but, they got found out. Honestly I can’t still believe it. To think that person can lose."

The man said that the dungeons were located in places that were out of the way.

The person who investigated those locations seemed to be really skilled.

But even such person got discovered. In that case, did this mean that Laukaan Kingdom also had someone skilled?

"Because of that, our side is also short in manpower. We can’t sneak in to investigate. That’s why I sought cooperation from your group."

Clara joined the talk.

"—Taking into consideration how this country has maintained the situation for ten years, doesn’t that mean that they have established the know-how to manage a dungeon? Perhaps the possibility of dungeon running wild now is low?"

In respond to that question the man was,

"That’s if they’re managing a single dungeon. But, from the condition of this country, it won’t develop this much just from a single dungeon that suddenly appeared. There should be multiple dungeons here without doubt. That’s the information that we obtained. Don’t you think that’s dangerous?"

This country must be increasing the number of dungeon in succession, thinking that they had succeeded.

That was certainly a dangerous situation.

I heard that it was difficult to manage even a single dungeon.

Here it seemed they were putting their hand on dungeons one after another—there was no way the neighboring countries would be able to calm down.

But, the Sixth was laughing here.

[Lyle, the true intention of these guys is different. They can't allow Laukaan Kingdom to become the alliance's leader. That's why they want to crush the dungeons that become the source of this country's influence. Them saying rampage and what not is just for appearance. They don't like Laukaan earning profit. They want the dungeons to vanish so they can sleep in peace is secondary benefit while they're at it.]

If it was like that then it was a horrible story.

It made me wanted to sympathize with Laukaan Kingdom.

[But, this is also convenient for us so let's destroy those dungeons.]

I was exasperated with the Third who was like usual. But then he added in dissatisfaction.

[This is a necessary fund gathering in order to defeat Celes. Lyle, you won't be able to do anything without dirtying your hand. Besides, it's also doubtful whether Laukaan Kingdom really has the proper know-how. You won't be able to ascertain that without seeing it by yourself.]

Shannon looked at the man.

She half-opened her eyes and made an expression as though she was looking at a dodgy person.

"What's wrong?"

"This person, he’s hiding something."

Miranda took out a knife hearing that.

Aria also drew out a short sword, while Sophia took an axe and blocked the door.

The man stood up in panic.

"Wa, wait! I’m not hiding anything!"

I raised my hand and told everyone to put away their weapon. Then I resumed talking with the man.

"Let’s hear the information that you have. We will search for the locations of the dungeons then."

"Haha~, it’s great that the leader can be talked with."

I decided to investigate the dungeons from tomorrow by relying on the man’s information.

***

Novem talked to me after the man returned.

"Lyle-sama, I have something to say about the man just now."

The location was the inn’s corridor.

It seemed she talked to me after checking that there was nobody around.

"You mean about what he is hiding right? Perhaps, he want us to destroy the dungeons because he don’t want Laukaan to become the alliance’s leader. He wants to crush this country’s source of economic power for that."

This was what they called the circumstance of other country according to the ancestors.

"So you’re aware."

Novem’s expression looked somewhat happy. I felt a bit guilty seeing that.

The ancestors were the one who noticed.

Novem changed her expression to a serious one.

"Everybody has their own circumstance. Even so, Lyle-sama still intend to destroy the dungeons?"

What Novem wanted to say was whether I would destroy the dungeons while ignoring Laukaan’s circumstance.

Laukaan would be harmed for the conveniences of us and the surrounding.

"—Even then I’ll do it."

Even though I thought she would be astounded or disappointed—.

"I’m happy to see that resolve."

Novem praised me.

Chapter 92 – Let's Search For Dungeon

There were three information we obtained from the man.

First, it was a fact that the dungeon in the south was destroyed by the qilin.

Second, the dungeon at the west was recently formed.

Third—the biggest dungeon was at the north.

If you walked deeper into the forest stretching out at the north, it would become a mountain.

We couldn't bring Porter to this kind of place. If we were searching for dungeon, then rather than moving with a lot of people—.

"Why with these members? I would like it better if I'm together with Novem."

Eva puffed up her cheeks while looking at Mirnada.

In contrast, Miranda didn't pay any mind to it.

"I think there's no problem with the selection though?"

Aria was looking in exasperation at the two who were like that.

"You two, do this properly. More importantly, is it okay to leave behind everyone else?"

I explained the reason why I chose these members to Aria who was checking the forest before us.

"Shannon can't keep up with us, while Clara's new prosthetic arm isn't finished yet. If we're leaving behind the two of them, they will also need guards."

Miranda was convinced.

"We can also move speedily if it’s with these members. Sophia isn’t suited to it, and if Monica is left behind with her then we won’t need to worry."

"Wait, why are you omitting out Novem?"

Eva flared up at Miranda.

"Oh, I’m sorry. I forgot."

It looked like Eva really didn’t like Miranda.

But, Miranda’s assumption wasn’t wrong.

Sophia wasn’t suited to travelling inside a forest.

One of the reasons was her outfit, and then her weapon the battleaxe was a large axe.

The trees would get in the way when she swung it around. If that was the case, then it would be more reassuring to ask her to stay behind.

Aria changed her weapon into a short spear so that she could fight even in the forest without problem.

Eva was an elf.

She was raised in forest, so this time I would rely on her.

Miranda was—all-purpose type. She could fight no matter what the situation.

Although this time the main purpose wasn’t combat.

I judged that the four of us would be the most optimum for this.

—I was but,

"I hate you."

"I see. That’s unfortunate. But, I don’t hate you."

Eva averted her gaze away. In contrast Miranda was looking nonchalant.

Aria who was watching those two murmured uneasily.

"Hey, will we be fine with these members?"

"It’s fine—I hope."

Aria held her head at her wits’ end hearing that.

***

—The remaining members visited Damian’s Dump Car.

A crowd was formed around the Dump Car.

The people heard that there was an unusual vehicle and came here to take a look.

Among them there were also merchants who wanted to buy it, but their shoulders dropped in dejection when they learned that they wouldn’t be able to drive it and returned home.

Inside the rear area of that Dump Car, Monica was—.

"It’s messy here. If it’s me, I’ll do this at here. Aa~aa, even though I actually wanted to take care of chicken dickwad, I wonder why do I have to stay behind. I have no motivation~"

She was helping Damian’s automaton Lily.

They were tidying up the place but, they immediately quarreled with each other due to their bad relationship.

"This piece of junk! Those things are positioned like that for goshujin-sama’s efficiency. Don’t move them around as you please. Also, do it seriously!"

They were tidying up while arguing with each other.

During that time, Clara was setting her new prosthetic arm.

Damian was drinking the beverage that Lily prepared.

It was tea that was filled with sugar to the brim.

"How is it?"

Clara was satisfied with the prosthetic that wasn’t finished yet.

"The movement is smoother than the previous one. I’m moved."

Clara’s expression didn’t really change, but she seemed to be happy.

Shannon was watching that from the side.

"It looks plain. Ah, that’s right! Let’s install a weapon into it!"

Shannon said her idea. Clara smiled wryly at her.

"The maintenance will be difficult if it has too many gimmicks. I’m satisfied with a prosthetic arm like before—"

Damian was interested at Shannon’s idea.

"Weapon huh. That’s nice. What kind of weapon should it be?"

"Hidden weapon will be cool. Like this, a weapon that will fly out. Other than that perhaps something like a cannon?"

Clara was troubled.

"It’ll be troublesome if the gimmicks increased. The daily maintenance will also become difficult, and more importantly a cannon’s recoil will make the prosthetic arm to come off."

Clara tried objecting because it would be unbearable if such thing was installed to her prosthetic arm.

But, Damian was,

"Cannon—that’s magnificent!"

"Right!? With this Clara can also become strong. That’s great isn’t it, Clara!"

Damian and Shannon’s eyes were sparkling.

Putting aside Damian, Shannon’s pure good will bewildered Clara.

"Tha, that’s, there is a saying that the simple thing is more magnificent instead. An arm that is filled with too much thing will make the repair hard if it’s broken you know?"

Damian was also considering the idea pragmatically.

"Certainly, the balance will crumble if a prosthetic arm of this size is filled with various things."

Damian looked disappointed. In contrast another light bulb flashed in Shannon’s head.

"Then you can just make the prosthetic arm bigger!"

"I see!"

Clara was at her wits’ end while looking at the two who were hitting it off.

"I, I’m begging you please make it a normal prosthetic arm."

Damian cleared his desk with a swipe of his arm and placed a paper on the created space. He drew a plan there.

"Yep, somehow it’s getting interesting. Yo~sh, I’ll create a new prosthetic arm!"

"Ou!"

Damian who got motivated and Shannon who punched up her fist.

Clara got uneasy seeing that.

Monica acted like it wasn’t her concern.

Lily was quietly tidying up the things that were scattered around the desk—.

***

We were wearing robe so that we wouldn’t stand out inside the forest while moving.

Eva was moving ahead. The three of us followed behind her.

We frequently had break in between while searching for the dungeon.

"Elf is amazing as expected. They can walk easily even in place with no path."

Aria was impressed.

She walked following the path that Eva was walking on.

Eva used a hatchet to cut off the branches and the like that were getting in the way.

Miranda who was seeing that was,

"If you do that too much, won’t people notice that we were passing through here?"

Eva who was being asked answered in displeasure.

"Someone who can find us with this will be able to notice us just from our footprints. We also have Lyle, this way will be faster if we’re just going to check the place and return."

It was fine even if we were found out, so we were prioritizing speed.

Miranda accepted the explanation.

"I see. I’m sorry that I disturbed you."

She apologized.

Aria was surprised.

"Miranda apologized."

"What do you think I am? I'll apologize if I think I've done something bad. Besides, I was simply asking a question. I have no other intention."

We came to a stop and each one of us took a break.

I looked around using Arts.

When I touched the ground with my hand, the surrounding terrain became a three-dimensional map in my head. The act of touching the ground itself had no meaning. It was just my mood.

I sensed human presence at faraway. It looked like they were patrolling with few number.

"—It's close."

When I said that, Eva climbed a tree and surveyed the area. And then, she immediately came down.

"Over there."

Her decision was fast. Aria asked.

"How do you know?"

"This is inside a forest. Even if they try to hide, they'll use fire if they're staying here for long. Besides, the trees are few in just one place. They cut down the trees that were in the way."

It was right to bring Eva along.

"Let's head there to check after resting."

First was one.

.

We stifled our voice and approached closer—there was a dungeon there.

Two large trees were standing side by side like an entrance. I could see the other side hazily.

When I checked with my Arts, there was noise and I couldn’t grasp the situation inside.

This was the usual reaction when I tried to look inside a dungeon.

If I wanted to investigate further, there would be no choice but to enter inside.

A lot of knights and soldiers set up tents around in their campsite.

Supplies were piled up. There were also knights drinking alcohol.

The four of us looked at each other and nodded.

We slowly moved away from that place and I opened my mouth after taking enough distance.

"That’s the second."

I placed a marker on my handwritten map and wiped my sweat.

It was also Eva who discovered the second.

She discovered the trace of a lot of people passing through and discovered this place by following that.

Aria was looking tired.

"The area is really vast when we’re searching around like this. I wonder how many forests there is? In the first place, just why is there so many dungeons?"

Eva replied to that question.

"I don’t know. But, it’s strange."

It seemed there was something that bothered her more.

Miranda was also the same.

"That man said it, that there is a person who is going around searching for dungeon like us. From the story it looks like he is really skilled but, why did someone like that get discovered?"

Bluntly speaking, the soldiers and knights were useless as lookout.

In that case, was that man’s evaluation wrong?

Or perhaps, we were the amazing one—no I guess.

Putting aside Eva, the rest of us were not much different from amateur.

Aria spoke optimistic words.

"Perhaps he is going to other place? Or perhaps, he is busy with the matter of qilin?"

That was possible enough.

That was why that man was also aiming at this timing.

Did he forcibly contact us also because he felt that this was a chance and got impatient?

While I was deep in thought—several yellow lights appeared in the map floating inside my head.

They were approaching by following the path that we were passing through.

Their travelling speed was fast, and above all else—the yellow color was starting to flicker into red.

When I lifted my face, the three’s gazes gathered on me.

"We’re discovered. There’re pursuers."

We immediately started moving but, the pursuers were faster than us.

The distance was gradually being shortened.

***

—It was a group of four elves that was chasing Lyle’s group.

Their faces were hidden by cloth that was wrapped around their head. They were wearing outfit with color that was blending with the forest.

The leader jumped down from a tree’s branch and checked the footprint.

"—Four people. The footprints are small. There’re also woman with them. No, most of them are woman."

His subordinates also gathered there. Then one person noticed.

"One of them is really experienced in forest. They might be an elf too."

A fellow elf.

But, the leader paid it no heed.

"If it’s this route, they should have discovered the hidden dungeon. Kill them as soon as they’re discovered."

They held no mercy even toward their fellow elf.

And then, the leader looked at one subordinate.

"You head to the nearby dungeon and tell them about this. After that report to the palace."

"Yes."

One of them dashed away immediately from the other three.

His figure was gone from view in the blink of eye.

The leader said.

"It’s time for hunting. The prey this time seems troublesome. Don’t let your guard down."

The three of them sprinted.

They were running inside the forest in full speed, as though nothing was obstructing them—.

***

I looked behind while running.

"They caught up."

Miranda asked me.

"What to do? If it’s trap then I can prepare several of them."

Eva denied Miranda’s opinion.

"There’s no time. I don’t think they’ll get caught in trap that is prepared hastily. Perhaps, our pursuers are elves."

Elf was strong in forest.

It was possible.

Aria looked at me.

"Lyle, use that! That Art to slow down the enemy’s speed!"

Inside the Jewel the Fourth was,

[You mean Up Down? That won’t activate if you can’t see your enemy.]

Increasing our speed while decreasing the enemy’s speed.

That Art of the Fourth could be used only after the enemy was sighted.

"The enemy will see our face in the distance where it can be used."

"If we can’t run away, then our only choice is to face them."

Miranda’s gaze moved to Eva.

Eva noticed that she was being looked at.

"Do you think that I’ll turn traitor? Even if they’re also elves, we’re complete strange from each other. They’re enemy if the other side is hostile at me."

It seemed she had resolved herself.

The Fifth’s voice came from inside the Jewel.

[It’s troublesome if they caught up. You have no obligation to show them your back. Lyle, lie in wait to ambush them.]

When I stopped running, the other three also stopped.

"We will intercept them. Eva, show me a place that is easy to fight in."

When I asked for Eva’s opinion, Aria glanced at Miranda. She must be thinking that Miranda would be burning in rivalry.

But, Miranda didn’t say anything.

"If it’s that then we better return back a bit. It’ll only be relatively better though."

This was disadvantageous for us who weren’t used with fighting inside forest, but there was no choice.

Then the Fifth was—.

[Lyle, there is still a bit more time. Confuse the enemy.]

When I tightly grabbed the Jewel,

[Don’t worry. This kind of battle is my specialty.]

***

—The elves caught up to Lyle’s group.

They saw the footprints on the ground and stopped.

"They split to three directions?"

It could be clearly seen even just from the eyes that his subordinate’s expression was dubious.

The leader crouched and compared the footprints.

"They’re really in a hurry. Did they notice our pursuit? —Perhaps the enemy has useful Art."

Another subordinate was,

"Did they use their comrades as bait? Perhaps they’re trying to deliver the information even if only one of them survive?"

The leader’s mouth was smiling behind the cloth.

"No, this is a trap."

One of the footprints was heading toward the mountain.

It was made to look like they split to three directions in order to lead the pursuers astray.

The leader judged that. He focused on one footprint.

"The other three are traveling by stepping on the man’s footstep. This way."

It was the footprint that was clearly deeper than the rest.

They immediately followed the man’s footprint.

"It seems they noticed us using an Art’s ability but, it’s obvious that they aren’t familiar with moving inside forest. Apparently there is someone knowledgeable about forest with them but, that’s all. They aren’t our match."

The two subordinates also didn’t object and followed behind wordlessly.

The three sensed that the enemy was nearby.

"They’re close."

The leader was looking down on the enemy that they weren’t as experienced in the forest than them.

Then, a young man was standing alone inside the forest.

His face couldn’t be seen due to the hood he wore. His mouth was also hidden. His right hand was holding a saber. He intended to fight.

One subordinate was losing patience.

"There is only one!"

Lyle was alone there.

"Is he planning to hold us back here for his comrades? Or are the rests hiding in ambush? —Either is fine. We'll take care of him quickly.

The leader assaulted Lyle together with his subordinates—.

***

The three men attacked.

I couldn't discern whether they were elf or not because their face was hidden by a cloth.

But—.

"Fast."

Two men were wielding short sword.

One man took out a bow.

When I blocked the attack of the man in the lead who was slashing swiftly, the second man thrust his short sword at my side.

When I immediately stepped back, they quickly sent out additional attack.

An arrow flew toward my face. I dodged by tilting my head aside.

The arrow grazed my hood.

One person was firing arrow from behind the two who were attacking with short sword.

Weren't they scared?

"Isn't it horrible to suddenly attack like this?"

The enemy didn't say anything back even when I made a light talk.

The Third’s voice came from the Jewel. He evaluated the enemy.

[They don’t make any useless talk. They’re troublesome opponent.]

Inside the forest with bad footing, when I leaped aside to dodge the arrow, the two men attacked with their short sword to stab me.

One of the man was outstandingly strong.

When I thrust with my saber, he agilely dodged and closed the distance.

At this rate I would get stabbed.

When I took my distance, the two’s short swords looked strangely shining.

Something was smeared on the blades.

"Poison huh. I really don’t want to face that."

The two of them moved to pincer me, while the other one secured a firing line with his bow.

"How really troublesome!"

I deflected the arrow with my saber. During that time the other two were approaching.

The gazes and focuses of the three attackers were gathered on me just as planned. In that moment.

A knife and arrow from above the tree attacked the two men in front of me with good timing.

One man noticed and grabbed his comrade. He used him as shield from the knife and arrow.

"So you sacrificed your comrade like that."

The next moment he let go of his comrade and took distance from me swiftly.

The other man was blocking Aria’s short spear with his bow.

"Yo, you!"

When Aria brought it into a contest of strength, the enemy gripped a knife with his left hand.

"Idiot!"

Miranda swiftly threw a knife to help Aria.

But, when Miranda’s focus was distracted, the man who used his comrade as shield took advantage of that and left this place.

Eva jumped down from a tree branch.

"One got away!"

The man who was stabbed by arrow and knife couldn’t move due to the poison on the knife paralyzing him.

[You got careless there but, if everyone is safe then it’s a good work I guess.]

The Fifth said that. Then the Third continued.

[The opponents were more skilled than expected. More importantly, this is bad. Your face isn’t seen but, they might identify your group from your characteristic. You better go back quickly.]

The surrounding was already getting dark.

Besides, Aria was exhausted.

Eva pulled down the cloth hiding her face to expose her mouth.

[Aria, why didn’t you finish him off?]

The two men were still alive.

Perhaps we would be able to interrogate them.

"So, sorry."

A dry sound resounded in the forest.

Aria hung her head down and apologized. Miranda slapped her.

Miranda’s face toward Aria was scary.

"What’re you going to do if your comrade is sacrificed because of you alone? Be more serious."

"I, I—"

Aria couldn’t say anything back.

When I was about to speak,

[Lyle, don’t say anything right now.]

The Fifth said that. The Fourth also agreed.

[Originally this is also Lyle’s job though. If Miranda didn’t back up Aria, the enemy wouldn’t get away.]

It was at that timing.

"—Something is coming."

The man’s reaction vanished from the direction he escaped to.

In exchange a large reaction with stronger hostility than the man showed up.

***

—The elf leader was rushing through the forest alone.

Leaves and trees were obstructing light inside the forest. The light was dim even in the middle of day.

When the sun was setting and it became evening, it became even darker.

"I miscalculated. But, I have grasped the enemy’s characteristic. I’ve to bring back this information."

The leader who survived by sacrificing his subordinate was only thinking of delivering this information to his ally.

The opponent possessed a really great Art.

It must be an Art that was specialized to detect enemy.

And then, three of the four people were female.

The hair color and eye color that he saw from the hood’s gap were blue.

If there was this much information, they should be able to identify the person to a certain degree.

"I’ve to hurry."

He might be overtaken if he stopped.

It was dangerous to run in full speed inside a dark forest but, he was hurrying to get away from Lyle’s group as far as possible.

Because of that, he overlooked something that normally he should be able to notice.

If it was monster inside this forest, then even he would be able to deal with them easily.

But, that one was—.

"This thing—sto, stop!"

When he leaped out from a bush carelessly, he saw the torso of a large snake crawling around.

The thickness was bigger than even a male adult’s torso. And it was long.

The large scales were gleaming eerily.

The torso entwined around the leader. Then the head part showed up.

"—A lamia?"

The upper body was human female.

The lower body was a snake monster. But, even then this was too large.

The leader had seen monsters of the same species several time but, this one was twice as large.

Its upper body was a woman but, its hands were too narrow and long for a human.

It attacked the leader with sharp claws and fangs.

He immediately slashed with his short sword, but the lamia’s skin was hard and the sword didn’t get through.

"This thing, a subspecies! Sto, stop!"

The lamia opened its large mouth widely as though its face was splitting open until the edge. It grabbed the leader with its hands and entwined around his body with its snake lower body.

Blood stained the cloth that covered the leader’s mouth.

The lamia widened its mouth even further and swallowed the leader whole.

And then, it let out its slender tongue that was split into two at the tip. The tongue moved around as though to sense something before the lamia resumed moving from there.

It was really fast even though it was slithering on the ground.

The lamia subspecies was heading toward Lyle’s group by weaving through the trees—.

***

The inside of the forest was noisy.

The birds were flapping their wings together to head to the sky.

And then, something big was heading toward us with its hostility fully bared.

"Something is coming. Let’s escape immediately."

It was really big.

I immediately ordered the retreat and left behind the captured men.

We couldn’t travel inside the forest while carrying two men.

Besides, we would be overtaken if we did something like that.

Aria was looking at the two men, but Miranda forcefully grabbed her arm and started running.

"What are you doing!"

Eva was running in front of us.

"I have a bad premonition somehow. Anyway let’s hurry and leave this place."

I felt some guilt leaving behind the men but, in any case they were enemy who tried to kill us.

"—Let’s hurry."

After we left from that place for a while, screams came from behind.

Aria also seemed to notice. Her expression looked pained.

***

—On the other hand.

Novem who was staying behind in the city was coming to the market together with Sophia.

They were shopping while also asking around about Laukaan’s situation.

The people who had been living here since the past had a lot of dissatisfaction but, the merchants were shouting in happiness with the increase of customer.

Customers would come even if they did nothing.

In business like restaurant, customer would come no matter how bad their food tasted.

It was to the degree that there would be line formed outside the shop no matter what shop it was.

The two of them were also lining up in front of a restaurant in order to have meal. Then when they finally could eat—.

"—Isn’t this terrible?"

Inside the crowded restaurant, Sophia’s face clouded from the food that tasted really bad.

Novem soaked her bread into her soup and ate it after it turned soft.

The surrounding guests also did the same.

It would be hard to eat the bread without doing that.

The food was bread, soup with only few ingredients, and water.

In addition the price was also expensive.

"Let’s finish eating quickly."

The reason the two of them deliberately ate outside was in order to listen to the surrounding’s talk. They were investigating Laukaan’s situation.

The business situations became booming since ten years ago. Since then the population was gradually increasing.

And then, since around two years ago, it became troubling that the population increased too much.

It seemed the government had taken various measures but, it looked like the city and the residences were unable to deal with the rapid change.

The crude table and chair were wobbling badly.

The restaurant too seemed to have forcefully increased its seats and tables. The distance with the neighboring table was too close.

But, thanks to that they could clearly listened the surrounding’s conversations.

"Did you hear about the qilin?"

"The guys who saw it were making a ruckus. If I didn’t hear wrong—they said the qilin was seen at the west."

"West? I heard that they saw it at the east."

The most talked topic was about the qilin that the palace ordered to be captured.

Novem stopped eating.

"—How foolish."

She muttered that, but it seemed Sophia who was focusing on the surrounding conversations didn’t hear it.

"Did you say something?"

Sophia asked. Novem smiled saying "It’s nothing" and resumed eating.

Then, this time Sophia was the one who stopped eating and looked down.

"Sophia-san, what’s the matter?"

"No, I’m wondering if it’s fine for us to be relaxing alone like this. Even though Lyle-dono and Aria and others are working hard, I’m just staying behind."

It seemed Sophia was envying Aria.

"I also resolved myself to come along. But, to suddenly be told to stay behind like this, I’m uncertain whether I’ll become useful for Lyle-dono."

Sophia said such thing. In respond Novem said to her.

"I tricked all of you."

"Tha, that’s, err—that’s true but"

Sophia didn’t expect that Novem would touch this topic. She was flustered.

She didn’t know how she should react.

That was why Novem continued.

"I have no intention of placing a hindrance at Lyle-sama’s side."

Sophia’s shoulders dropped in dejection.

"—A, a hindrance is it. Novem-san too is really harsh."

"Please don’t misunderstand. I evaluated you highly. That was why I welcomed you as our comrade. You should have more confidence in yourself."

When Sophia raised her face in surprise, Novem returned to her meal.

Sophia’s face was gradually getting redder in embarrassment.

"E, err, that’s, I!"

"Please eat quickly. After that, there is no time to lament your lack of strength. What’s important is to think about how to pass your time right now."

Novem told Sophia that there was also thing she could do because everyone wasn’t here right now.

Sophia showed her motivation hearing that.

"You’re right! Then, I’ll quickly finish eating and practice swinging. Hamu-! —It taste bad."

Sophia ate the bread that was soaked into the soup but, her face immediately turned cloudy.

"That’s certainly true."

Novem showed a smile seeing such Sophia—.

Chapter 93 – Lamia

Inside the dark forest.

We were holding our breath.

We could hear the chirp of bird and insect, but it was dark we couldn’t see anything.

But, the enemy was detecting us.

It seemed that it was already seeing us as prey. It was chasing us around really persistently.

It maintained a certain distance and would close it if we let our guard down.

It was an unpleasant feeling.

Miranda was looking at Aria.

"Aria, treat your injury."

"Just this much isn’t a big deal."

"Just do it."

Miranda insisted. Aria reluctantly treated her wound while asking me.

"How is it doing?"

I honestly answered.

"It doesn’t look like it will let us go. I think it’ll attack somewhere before we can leave the forest."

We had run around really far but, the opponent was chasing us.

Toward that persistence, Eva was looking around while talking about the past.

"When I was a child, I was lost in a forest and a monster chased me around. This feels the same like that time."

"What kind of monster it was?"

When I asked about the monster,

"It was a lamia. It’s a monster with female upper body and snake lower body. There are some stories where the monster’s upper body is described as beautiful, but its appearance in reality is normally scary. Even a perverted man will run away in full speed if this monster comes out."

It seemed that its upper body was naked and its breasts were exposed, but it was scary that even a big man would run away.

Miranda leaned on a tree while staying vigilant to the surrounding.

"I investigated it at adventurer guild but, recently it seemed to start appearing in this area. Perhaps it came out from a dungeon somewhere?"

The same thing also happened previously. It was when I was still a beginner adventurer.

Eva brought water to her mouth and drank slowly.

She took care of the dryness of her throat before answering Miranda.

"I wonder about that. If it’s a lamia, then it wouldn’t be strange even if the man who got away defeat it. Even if that man intentionally let it go, it’s impossible for the current us to be unable to get away from a lamia."

The members here put importance in speed even within the party.

These members had their traveling speed increased by the Fourth’s Art.

Even so we couldn’t get away.

Aria finished her wound’s treatment and stood up. Then she raised her guard to the surrounding.

"In the first place, it’s scary that we don’t know what is pursuing us."

We were inside a dark forest.

Bluntly speaking it was scary.

If I was alone, surely it would feel discouraging.

While the four of us were talking, the Seventh’s voice came from the Jewel.

[Lyle, don’t talk too much. You should rest too.]

I entrusted this place to the three and took a bit of rest.

It seemed I was more tired than I thought. I immediately fell asleep.

***

—After confirming that Lyle had fallen asleep, the atmosphere of the three changed.

"He fell asleep right away. He’s like a child."

Eva said those words. Miranda also opened her mouth.

"That’s a good thing. —More importantly, Aria."

Aria’s shoulders shook for a moment in surprise. Then she turned toward Miranda. It seemed she knew what Miranda was going to say. Her awkward expression was becoming like a child who got scolded.

"What?"

"Why did you hesitate? If it’s you then you should be able to finish it in one attack."

If it was Aria, she should be able to attack one of the trio who attacked them. Miranda blamed her.

"I know. But—my body didn’t move."

Eva shrugged.

"It ended safely but, get your act together."

"You are really unruffled. Don’t you feel any hesitation?"

Eva narrowed her eyes.

"There would be various troubles when you’re traveling. I got attacked by bandit not just by once or twice."

Toward such Eva, Miranda was,

"Oh, how reliable."

Eva raised one eyebrow and showed displeasure on her face.

"Your words sound fake somehow."

"You really said that. I understand that you don’t like me but, to show it openly like that every time is problematic you know?"

Miranda was telling Eva to not involve her personal emotion in an important time like this.

Eva too seemed to understand that.

"Even so I'll do my job. So let me complain at least. It's irritating when I'm looking at you."

Expression vanished from Miranda’s face.

"Choose the time and place. And also, let me say this but—if you come with us with reason like song or story, it will be a bother for Lyle if your feeling is just to that degree. I wish you won’t compare your happy-go-lucky self to the people around you."

Eva scowled at Miranda’s words. Her atmosphere was gradually turning grave.

Aria came in between them in exasperation.

"Stop it already. It’s depressing for me who is watching you two."

Eva flared at Aria who said that.

"I don’t want to get told that by you who can’t even accomplish your role. I’m serious here. I’m risking my life for the sake of song. There’s no way I can just stay quiet when someone make light of that."

She was keeping her voice low, but she couldn’t hide her anger.

Aria faltered at Eva’s anger.

"So, sorry."

But Miranda was,

"Aria has no need to apologize. If there is another handy material, than this girl will abandon Lyle and go over there."

Eva accompanied Lyle for the sake of song and story. Miranda was wary toward her who was like that.

Unlike Miranda and others, Eva’s motive was weak.

If it was about motive then Clara was also similarly weak, but Miranda was only regarding Eva as dangerous.

Clara was somewhat clumsy. Even if she tried to betray them Miranda was confident she would be able to spot it.

But, what about Eva?

She had the information network of elf and excelled in acting.

She was capable and possessed various experiences.

When push came to shove, she could come to a clean decision even when facing against her fellow elf. So Miranda also personally evaluated her highly.

But, if it was for the sake of her own benefit, then wouldn't such Eva be able to betray Lyle easily?

Such doubt was growing inside Miranda.

"As I thought I hate you. I really hate you."

A large gulf was being created between Miranda and Eva—.

***

—Inside the Jewel.

When Lyle entered a deep sleep, the three's voices couldn't be heard anymore.

When the arguing voices were cut off, the five people opened their mouth.

The five of them were making a somewhat discomposed expression.

[Girls are really scary.]

[I understand. I rea~lly understand!]

[Miranda's doubt is only natural though.]

[That’s right. Clara too, her motive for accompanying Lyle is a bit—]

[—When the conversation couldn’t be heard anymore at the middle, rather than feeling disappointed I was relieved instead.]

The ancestors who were listening to the conversation of the girls were feeling envious of the sleeping Lyle who didn’t notice anything.

For something like this, they might as well listened to the entirety of the conversation, if not it would still be better to not have heard anything at all rather than only half like this.

The Jewel had unstable part like this.

And that was getting especially stronger recently.

Lately—no, since the encounter with Celes, the condition of the Jewel was strange.

The Fourth sighed.

[Is it as I thought, that the Jewel is unstable because it’s an imitation?]

Celes said that this Jewel was a "failure" and "defective product".

It would be unfortunate if the Jewel was unstable because of that, but they still had to depend on the blue Jewel even then.

But, the five people here didn’t feel pessimism from that.

The Third was smiling with composure.

[Even if it’s a fake but its strength is genuine. A tool is only meaningful when it’s used skillfully. It’s unfortunate that it’s unstable, but the bigger problem is—]

The problem right now was the relationship among the girls that was worse than they thought rather than the Jewel.

[Clara-chan isn't really a problem. That girl's motive is understandable, and I personally am happy that she is coming along.]

When the Third said that, the Fourth was exasperated.

[The Third's favoritism to Clara is showing out. Even so, Aria's resolve is lacking. When you consider that Sophia is also similar, aren't these two problematic?]

But, the Fifth had different view.

[With how capable Eva is, it makes me don't want to imagine how it'll become if she betray Lyle. The problem of Aria and Sophia can be solved easily if they accumulate experience.]

The Sixth who was favoring Miranda was,

[Miranda's opinion is right. I think that we should be on guard against Eva.]

Among them, the Seventh was pondering seriously.

The Third called out to him.

[What's the matter?]

[No, actually about the elf—they exist everywhere, and there are also groups of them traveling throughout the continent.]

[—Yeah.]

[They're unrelated with any country, and are cooperative with their fellow elf. They frequently exchange information, and sometimes they manipulate the populace using song. The elves who attacked this time were also troublesome.]

Everyone in this place understood what he wanted to say.

Until now Lyle had been helped many times by Eva.

And by the elves too.

That was how convenient the elves were.

It was the proof of how capable Eva and the elves were.

It would be extremely troublesome to turn such existence into enemy.

[The demihuman didn't really go against human since the past. If we consider the elves who attacked this time as subordinates of Laukaan, they're in the position of being used by human. I became curious about that since some time ago. Just what is demi human?]

The Third was interested to the Seventh's question but,

[That too is certainly important but, there is a big problem right in front of us. Something has to be done about the relationship between the girls. I feel like I'll get stomachache just from watching them. Is there anyone who has a solution?]

The other four averted their face at the Third's question.

[Please don't ask me for a solution.]

[It's also impossible for me. I'm fundamentally the type who is watching carefully from the sideline.]

[—I, I also got stomachache from the quarrel between fellow woman so I'll pass.]

[It's only this type of problem that is a bit impossible even for me.]

The Third was laughing.

[Eh? Everyone is really unreliable. —Or rather, I myself don’t have any solution. Really, what to do about this?]

The Third was letting out a dry laugh while sweating nervously in front of this problem.

It was the proof that he was troubled.

The five were completely useless in regard of the girl relationship problem.

They didn’t really consider the matter of being pursued by monster as that great of a problem—.

***

I opened my eyes after sleeping for a bit. There the other three were standing guard wordlessly.

There was no one else who was resting. It also didn’t look like they were standing guard by turn.

"Sorry, I’ll take turn."

I got up while calling out to them. I also confirmed the enemy’s position at the same time.

The enemy was slowly closing the distance.

"—It’s really close. My bad you three but, let’s get away from this place first."

The three nodded but—Miranda and Eva looked strange.

Aria was looking concerned at the two of them but, at the same time she also looked scared.

"You three, what happened?"

"There is nothing."

"Nothing much."

Miranda answered with a smile. Eva was replying in a bad mood.

Aria was about to say something, but she closed her mouth in the middle.

The air was strange.

It was clear that something happened while I was sleeping.

"Hey, really what’s going on? Eh? Did I do something wrong?"

I thought that perhaps they were irritated at me, but it seemed that wasn’t the case.

"We aren’t angry so let’s go already."

Eva said that and walked ahead. Miranda shrugged and followed behind her.

After the two went ahead, Aria said to me.

"You were sleeping so peacefully. —How envious."

"I, I’m sorry."

Was she angry at me for sleeping?

However, it didn’t look like that at all.

Aria sighed with a tired face while going ahead.

I also started walking.

I grabbed the Jewel and asked the ancestors what happened.

"Did something happen while I was asleep?"

There was a bit of pause before the reply came.

The Third’s voice sounded hesitant. He talked to me as though to dodge the question.

[—There wasn’t anything. More importantly, you’re being chased right now. Focus on that.]

"Ye, yes."

***

—The monster that was chasing Lyle’s group was molting.

The monster considered it a good luck that Lyle’s group stopped walking.

The lamia took time to molt. Its appearance changed to become closer to a snake.

Scales covered its whole body. Only a shadow of its breasts remained.

Its long and slender arms near its head remained but, the amount increased to six.

Besides, the fingers of its hands decreased to three fingers while their claws became even sharper.

Even monster would go through “growth” after defeating a powerful enemy.

Its forked tongue quickly went in and out. Its eyes that had grown larger were looking around restlessly at the surrounding.

Nearby, there was a large frog passing by. Its tongue stretched out and caught the frog before it retracted back quickly to swallow it.

However, it was insufficient for the lamia who had grown bigger.

It used its stamina for molting and now it was hungry.

Before long Lyle's group started moving. Sensing that, its eyes narrowed like a fox.

It looked like it was smiling.

The bigger lamia quickly slithered on the ground in pursuit of Lyle's group—.

***

—While traveling through the forest.

Aria was blaming herself.

(Pathetic. I'm the only one who is being a hindrance.)

Miranda who could do anything.

Eva who specialized in forest.

While Lyle could perform amazing feat in every aspect.

Aria believed that originally she was the one in charge of scouting in this party.

But, she was inferior compared to both Miranda and Eva.

She was doing nothing except assisting Lyle.

Besides, she could do nothing except watching the atmosphere within the party worsening.

She came to hate her pathetic self's strength.

She wondered just how much she had to grow stronger to be able to stand side by side with them.

The anxiety inside Aria was growing bigger.

Was she dragging back Lyle who decided to fight Celes?

And then—could she fight against Celes?

The more she thought, the more she felt how small she was.

"Aria."

She was called and lifted up her face in surprise. There she saw Miranda.

"We're taking a break. Also, you'll die if you let your guard down."

Aria became embarrassed from getting cautioned.

"I, I get it."

A bluff instantly appeared from her mouth. Even that felt pathetic for her.

It was a vicious circle.

Miranda didn't say anything to Aria's attitude.

"That's fine then. —Lyle, how is the enemy?"

Lyle looked deeper into the forest—toward the direction they were running away from. His expression was grave.

"I think it plan to attack us before we get out of the forest. It's closing the distance gradually."

Lyle touched the ground and used his Art.

Then, it seemed he grasped the opponent's shape due to the shortened distance.

"A person? No, a snake? The snake has hands."

Eva entered the conversation.

"Isn’t that a lamia?"

"It’s big. It’s too big compared to the information."

Lyle also knew about the guild’s information of the monsters that frequently appeared in this area.

Compared to that, the pursuing monster was big.

It seemed the shape was also different.

"It also has six things that feels like arms."

"What’s that? Are they really arms?"

"I don’t know."

The pursuer was something like a large snake that was swiftly slithering on the ground.

Furthermore, it easily defeated those elves.

They couldn’t let their guard down.

Lyle was making a tired face.

"If possible I don’t want to fight it."

Originally they entered the forest with the objective of searching dungeons. Their policy was to avoid battle.

Aria looked at Lyle while,

(Ah, he grasped the blue Gem again.)

It seemed to be Lyle’s habit. She often caught sight of him doing that when making decision.

When looking at him grasping or rolling it in his fingers—Aria felt relieved.

When he was like this, Lyle was strong and reliable.

"—Let’s attack it."

Hearing his words, both Miranda and Eva started checking their equipment.

Aria also performed equipment check slightly late.

Even this trifling thing like this made Aria felt that she was inferior to the people around her—.

***

We were lying in wait at an open space inside the forest. An eerie voice was approaching.

It was the sound of rubbing the ground when slithering and the trees getting shaved.

It could easily be imagined that something big was approaching.

Before long, a large snake showed up from among the trees.

Its body was stretching into the forest. Its tail couldn’t even be seen due to the plants hiding it.

"It’s huge."

I unconsciously leaked out my simple thought. The large snake’s tongue was licking the air.

I had fought against snake monster several times but, this thing’s abnormality was more at its appearance rather than its size.

It had six long and slender arms near its head.

Miranda immediately threw her knife, but it was deflected by the monster’s hard scale.

"It’s not a lamia. Rather than that, there wasn’t any information of this monster."

There were a lot of monster with large snake shape.

Their strength also greatly varied. How to deal with them also changed depending on the variety.

It would be extremely troublesome if it had poison.

Eva fired her arrow while,

"I also don’t know it. If it has poison we won’t be able to treat it. It’ll be better to defeat it without getting near."

If Clara was here then we might be able to hear a detailed information about this monster, but she wasn’t here right now.

Aria was bewildered.

"Not getting near you say—how’re we going to defeat it then!?"

Miranda was composed.

Eva was also the same.

The two’s gaze moved toward me.

"I don’t really want to use it though."

I grasped the Jewel with my left hand tightly, then I tore it off from my neck.

The silver chain was changing into the shape of bow. It became a silver bow without string.

A string made from light could be pulled like bowstring.

When I pinched the bowstring and drew, an arrow of light was created.

The large snake opened its large mouth. It looked like it was laughing to me.

"Even though the power’s adjustment is difficult."

I grumbled.

The bow that the Second left behind was different from the silver great sword that the First left behind. It gave me an obedient impression.

No, it was diligent.

To put it in a bad way, it was inflexible.

If I mistook the strength adjustment even slightly,

"—Ah!"

The large snake spread open its six arms widely and rushed forward as though to capture me. I fired the arrow at the eerie large snake. —I accidentally fired.

The moment I got flustered thinking that it was slightly disgusting, the power got heightened without me intending it.

The arrow of light pierced the large snake’s head and opened a hole in its forehead.

For a moment, it only looked like there was a hole opened, but right after that the large snake’s head burst open.

It was fortunate that the blood and flesh was blowing out to behind the large snake.

A bit later, at the other side of the large snake—from behind it there was a sound of explosion. The arrow of light that pierced through the head crashed somewhere and exploded.

The strength adjustment was harder than before.

When I looked around, the inside of the forest became covered all over with the snake’s blood. It was a really terrible scenery.

Aria was surprised. Her mouth was opening and closing while yelling.

"It finished instantly! Why were we running around then!?"

—That reaction was only natural.

But, I too wanted to be allowed to make an excuse.

"Recently this weapon is especially unstable. Besides, with a sound that loud—"

In the middle of talking, I saw smoke rising up from ahead.

[Aa~aa, you did it.]

The Third’s easygoing voice came.

Eva was exasperated.

"Won’t it be better to use the great sword? More importantly, let’s go extinguish the fire first."

Miranda said to Eva.

"That great sword is no good. You have to get closer to use it, and more importantly Lyle will collapse after one shot."

"But it’s no good if you cause fire like this."

"That’s why we were running around right? I wish you will stop doing nothing but complaining."

I returned the bow into Jewel—into a necklace and hung it on my neck.

"Anyway let’s deal with the fire first. After that, we’ll have to leave the forest immediately."

He didn’t want to cause a commotion because he didn’t want to be detected by the knights and soldiers of Laukaan Kingdom that seemed to be in the surrounding area.

Aria pouted.

"I’m not convinced."

In contrast Miranda was understanding.

"From the start it was already said that we would refrain from fighting right? Did you think we were running around because we won’t be able to defeat the monster?"

Eva made fun of Aria.

"Aria really isn’t composed."

Aria got angry and her face reddened, so I hurried the three.

"Let’s quickly extinguish the fire and leave this forest. Good grief, perhaps the investigation will be hard for a while after this."

Our objective of searching for the dungeons of Laukaan Kingdom would become difficult with this.

Aria looked at the large snake.

"We aren’t going to recover the magic stone?"

I shook my head.

"We don’t have time to search for it, and in case the snake is poisonous we don’t know how to deal with it. That’s scary. It’s best to not do anything."

We didn’t have time to search the large body of the snake for the magic stone.

We could only leave it alone like this.

If it was smaller, we could cover it with soil to hide it—that was impossible I guess.

That would be obviously too suspicious.

It would be better to escape right away.

"Let’s go already. If the fire speared out we won’t be able to deal with it. I can’t allow that as an elf."

Eva was itching to extinguish the fire. She led us toward the fire.

***

The arrow of light seemed to have gone very far.

We advanced forward using the lined up trees that got a hole few centimeter wide opened in their trunk in a straight line as sign.

"It would be better if you fired the arrow toward the sky."

It couldn’t be helped that Eva said that.

If I did that, then the work wouldn’t increase needlessly like this.

"It’ll be troublesome if it fall far away like a high-angle shot. Or rather, can that arrow fall?"

In respond to Miranda’s simple question, I,

"I never try it, so I don’t know."

A performance that was too good was also a problem.

It felt like the arrow would go forward no matter how far, but seeing its shape as bow and arrow, I also got the feeling that the arrow would be pulled by gravity and fell.

Aria lifted her face slightly and sniffed the smell.

"The burn smell—it’s near."

We hurriedly headed to the fire scene with the four of us. There we found several scorched trees remaining.

It seemed that the surrounding was also burning. There was black soot around.

However, the fire was already extinguished.

I suddenly sensed a presence and looked around. There I saw a girl sitting on a nearby tree.

Her legs were swaying to and fro, but she stood up on the rock when we approached.

There was still a trace of childishness remaining in her appearance.

But strangely there was a pressure from her.

Her blonde hair was cut short. Her eyes were blue.

Her clear eyes were looking at us.

She was standing on the rock, so she was looking down on us.

The girl before us put her hand on her waist and said.

"It’s not admirable to play fire in forest."

The girl started sermonizing with really patronizing tone. Her voice was also childish as expected.

How should I say it—it was strange.

First the girl’s clothes was strange.

It was an outfit that was unsuitable for walking in a forest.

It exposed the majority of her skin.

A white cloth that only hid her breast.

Because her abdomen was exposed, her navel could be seen.

The sleeves that were starting from her upper arm were loose. It looked difficult to move with.

Her bare legs stretched out from the white short pant she was wearing. Her feet were wearing sandals.

It wasn’t an outfit for entering a forest.

That kind of outfit would often get stuck at grass or tree branch. It would soon become ragged. Because there was many exposed body part, her skin would get many bruises and wounds.

That was in the normal case.

However, even though the girl was this deep in the forest, there wasn’t any fray or dirty of that kind on the girl’s outfit at all.

Her skin was also really clean—a faint scar could be seen on her neck but it seemed to be an old wound.

"But, <ruby>I<rt>boku</rt></ruby>’ll forgive you all because you return here. Does the elf-san over there lead the other three back here? Ah, could it be the fire was unrelated with you four? If that’s the case then that’s my misunderstanding."

The young girl had proper bulge on her chest.

That was why there was no doubt she was a girl.

When she referred to herself she used “boku”.

It gave me a somewhat otherworldly impression of her.

Eva talked to her representing us.

"Did you extinguish the fire for us? Actually the forest got set on fire due to our carelessness. If you extinguished it for us then please allow us to say our thanks."

I could see that Eva was wary.

Miranda was also similar.

I could also hear the ancestors’ voices from inside the Jewel.

[This girl, don’t you think that she is somewhat unnatural?]

[It’s strange that she is in a forest like this but, her outfit is especially strange. There isn’t a single wound on her body even though she is dressed like that. Is it related with her Art?]

Next after the Third and the Fourth was the Sixth.

[She look like a really precocious child but, I don’t think that’s all there is to her. Lyle, be on your guard. Even so, it feels like I have seen her somewhere before.]

It seemed that something bothered the Sixth.

In respond to that the Seventh was,

[Is it another descendant that you created somewhere else? Spare us from any more of that kind of talk.]

[Idiot! I’m thinking seriously here. It’s not that kind of story, something is really bothering me.]

I could hear their quarreling voice, but the Fifth alone wasn’t saying anything.

The girl stared fixedly at us for a bit before her expression broke into a smile.

She then sat down cross-legged on the rock.

"How honest. I intended to discipline you four for a bit if you lied but, I’ll forgive you. Also, I was the one who extinguished the fire. I had business in this area so I did that secondary to it."

Secondary?

I got curious and asked.

"You have a business in a forest like this? Even though there isn’t anyone living here?"

The girl waved her hand lazily and spoke looking like it was bothersome.

"This too is something like our job after all. I wish that you all will get your act together more."

I was curious with the way she said that.

Miranda’s wariness deepened.

"Do you know what we’re doing?"

She looked like she was going to draw out her weapon. I stopped her with my gaze.

The girl was grinning while watching us.

I didn’t understand. Just what was this girl knew?

"I don’t know what your group is up to. But, I myself want you human on the whole to get your act together. It will be a disaster to do nothing to a dungeon no matter how much time passed. Really, I wonder when human will learn."

Those words sounded like she was saying that she wasn’t human.

She didn’t look like a mere child putting on air.

My wariness deepened a lot. Then Eva talked to the girl.

"Who are you? —What do you plan to do with us?"

The girl shook her head. She was slightly flustered.

"Ah, don’t misunderstand. I have no intention to attack. After all I’m someone who is especially kind to human even among my race. But, I’ll have to give you a warning if you do something bad. Using that kind of power inside the forest is not allowed you know?"

The girl’s gaze was turned toward me.

She noticed that I caused the fire by using the silver bow.

I gulped.

"You know everything?"

"I saw it after all. A lamia went through growth and it looked like it would do something bad, so I was thinking to exterminate it. But, I got interested with you."

I felt relieved seeing the girl smiling at me.

It seemed that we would be able to go through this without any hostility.

I turned toward the other three and nodded. Then I relaxed my guard and talked to the girl.

"Are you not human?"

"Yep, I’m not."

The girl was showing a friendly grin. But she didn’t say anything more.

She must have no intention to tell us her true identity.

"I wish to thank you for helping us to extinguish the fire. Thank you. I wish there is something I can give you to show our gratitude but—"

When I was thinking of giving her something, the girl pointed at my chest.

"Then, give me that. Though if you resist, I’ll take it away forcefully."

Her expression was different from before.

My back felt chilly from the low tone.

The girl’s blue eyes were shining.

Her smile vanished and she became expressionless. She was staring fixedly at my necklace—the blue Jewel.

Eva asked back dubiously.

"Lyle’s pendant?"

Miranda stepped forward to cover me up,

"I’m sorry. This is his heirloom. That’s why, please ask for something else. We will grant what you want as much as we can so—"

The girl didn’t allow for the topic to be shifted.

"I don’t care about gratitude for dealing with the fire. I want that thing you have there. After that, let me ask you this time—why is it, my benefactor is being imprisoned inside that?"

Hearing those words, the Fifth opened his mouth inside the Jewel.

[—As I thought, is that May?]

The girl opened her eyes wide. Was she able to hear the voice?

And then, a golden horn grew out from her forehead.

A shining golden horN.

The moonlight was shining on that treeless open space.

Chapter 94 – The Fifth and the Qilin May

"A horn grew out? Could it be, a monster?"

"That’s a terrible misunderstanding. But, I’ll leave the correction for later."

Aria who readied her short spear was surprised by the girl’s transformation.

But there was no anger.

A girl who was younger than us was emitting an indescribable pressure.

Although they were surprised by that bizarre spectacle, both Eva and Miranda took out their weapon.

The three of them reacted quickly.

And yet, the girl closed her distance with us in an instant.

Miranda threw her knife in panic, but the girl caught it between her fingers without even looking.

As for Eva, a purple lightning burst and destroyed her quiver before she could aim her bow.

The girl faced the two,

"Can you two stay quiet? Right now I’m angry."

The girl who came in front of me was staring fixedly at the Jewel.

The Fourth was panicked.

[What is the meaning of this? Until now it was impossible for someone other than Lyle to hear our voices.]

Was this also because the Jewel was unstable?

I drew my saber and slashed, but it was easily snapped by the girl with a horizontal wave of her hand.

The broken blade was rotating in the air before stabbing on the ground.

The girl reached out toward my chest—toward my Jewel, so I leaped backward.

The girl whose reached out hand grasped empty air looked at me and muttered.

"What did you do? —What did you do to Fredericks?"

Miranda took out a new weapon while saying,

"Fredericks you say—"

The one who noticed first was Eva.

"Isn’t that the name of Lyle’s ancestor?"

Previously I told Eva various things about the ancestors to turn their story into song.

Because of that, she immediately recalled that name.

The girl stared fixedly at my face.

"H~mm, his descendant is it? You look somewhat similar with him. But, there’s no way I can’t forgive you for imprisoning Fredericks because of that."

"Wait! Listen to me. This is—"

Before I could explain, the Fifth yelled from inside the Jewel.

[Mei, if you can hear me then listen! I'm not imprisoned. You must not fight Lyle!]

That voice of the Fifth—didn't reach.

To be more accurately speaking,

"I can feel Fredericks's mana. He is telling me something."

What the Fifth said wasn't conveyed at all.

[That's hopeless!]

The Fifth yelled at the Fifth.

It seemed that she understood that the Fifth was yelling something. But the misunderstanding wouldn't be solved with just that.

[—No way]

The Fifth was stunned that his voice didn't reach.

[Fifth, you've really done it now.]

The Third said that. The Fifth replied with a troubled voice.

[—It will be a disaster if the Jewel is taken away like this. It's practically impossible to take back a treasure from qilin.]

The Jewel had a connection of mana with me.

It seemed that the connection would be maintained no matter how far away the distance was, but it the distance was too far then the Art would become unusable.

And then, the amount of mana consumption would increase in order to maintain the mana connection through the distance.

If the Jewel was taken away here, it would really become a genuine cursed item for me.

"You’re mistaken. This is!"

"Shut up."

The girl lashed out with a spinning kick.

I bent my arm to guard from the attack—.

"Kahah!"

—I couldn’t neutralize the impact and got blown away.

"Lyle! —You!"

Miranda slashed at the girl, but it was dodged with a movement that looked like a dance.

Miranda took distance from the girl who immediately counterattacked. She discarded her weapon and produced string from both her hands.

Seeing that,

"You’re a bit troublesome. That’s why, go sleep for a bit."

Eva was holding a hatchet, but she seemed to think she wouldn’t be able to do anything in close quarter combat and rushed toward me instead.

"Lyle, can you stand?"

"I, I’m fine. I jumped in order to neutralize the impact."

I bluffed, but my arm that blocked the kick was paralyzed.

—What strength.

I stood up with Eva’s help. There the girl looked at us.

"I won’t let you get away."

She ignored Miranda and headed over here. The girl kicked on the ground.

But, Miranda smiled behind her.

Miranda’s string looked like it stabbed the ground.

"Too naïve."

Six hands made from soil extended out from the ground. They grabbed the girl’s legs and arms.

"Do you think you can stop me with this much?"

"Just an instant is all I need. If there is an instant—"

The girl forcefully destroyed the arms made from soil, but this time Aria attacked her.

She charged forward with her short spear held at her side. She pushed the girl until her feet left the ground and pressed her until the nearby huge tree.

"—Aria will manage something for us."

The girl was hit by an attack that normal human wouldn’t be able to endure. She opened her eyes wide.

"I’m surprised. That’s really fast. But, just this is—"

"You’re right. Just this is insufficient isn’t it?"

Aria said that, then she immediately withdrew from there.

The strings Miranda produced entwined around the girl and wrapped around the huge tree.

Miranda didn’t relax even after that. She created several golems.

The golems that only consisted of arms grabbed the girl together with the tree.

"They’re specially made. You won’t be able to get out so easily."

After the table was turned, Aria looked at me.

"Lyle!"

I understood what she wanted to say.

She wanted me to decide.

But, inside the Jewel the Fifth was—.

[O, oi, wait! Don’t kill May! That girl is a qilin! She is a cute kid!]

I could hear the deranged voice of the Fifth, but the Sixth closed his mouth forcefully.

[Just shut up. Lyle, here you should—]

I nodded and said to the three.

"Everyone—let’s run."

"—Eh? Why’re we running away!?"

It seemed Aria intended to finish this here but, I instantly chose to escape.

This matter of qilin—just what should I do about it.

***

—After Lyle’s group escaped.

The left behind qilin, May was looking down while still being restrained on the tree.

"—I’ve to save Fredericks. I finally found him. I—I have to save Fredericks no matter what."

Her blue eyes shined, then the golem arms pressing her on the huge tree burst out.

Mei forcefully tore off the tough strings that Miranda produced and started walking slowly. The clothes she was wearing stretched out and wrapped her body.

And then from that human appearance she returned into the form of horse—a qilin with white scales and fluttering golden mane.

From the horn that grew out on her forehead, purple light flashed out with crackling sound.

"Unforgivable. I absolutely won’t forgive someone who do horrible thing to Fredericks!"

When May kicked on the ground, explosive sound resounded to the surrounding.

Soil was blasted to the air, at the same time May also leaped toward the sky.

May rushed off to the sky in full speed. There she searched around for Lyle’s group.

After May rushed away, wind whirled up and the trees of the forest were making swaying sound.

"I’ll find you without fail no matter where you run!"

Lyle and others unexpectedly gotten pursued by the qilin May—.

***

Inside the forest.

We found a handy depression that we covered with grasses and branches to hide in it.

The qilin seemed to be running in the sky. Sometimes there would be wind blowing strongly.

Eva spoke with a small voice.

"Hey, I’m just guessing here but—is that girl a qilin?"

Aria was making an astounded face.

"She is a girl no matter how you look at her. She’s a human."

"No, there’re various possibilities, like her transforming or something. Aa~, I remembered. There is a story of a qilin transforming into woman and love a man."

"That’s a fairy tale right?"

"The possibility cannot be denied."

It seemed there was a story of qilin in fairy tale.

Miranda was,

"If she was actually a qilin, that meant we had angered a divine beast. Lyle—I mean, Lyle’s ancestor, what did he do? It seemed she was terribly angry though?"

It was only natural but, the three of them couldn’t understand what May was talking about.

Even if she said that I imprisoned the Fifth, they didn’t get what she meant.

Eva was griefing.

"This is the worst. Being chased around by a qilin is the worst. I know several stories of qilin getting angered but, none of them ended in a good note."

Miranda provoked Eva.

"Then, how about you run away alone?"

"You’re really an unpleasant woman. Because you’re like this that I absolutely dislike you. I won’t leave Lyle."

That was a line that would make my heart beat fast if I didn’t know the reason behind it.

She accompanied me because she wanted to use me as song material. Knowing that circumstance, I didn’t even feel happy hearing that line.

Right now we were blending with the scenery inside a depression. We even covered ourselves with soil.

We were lying down with our body pressed on each other, waiting for the qilin to leave.

But, it seemed the qilin was flying around above the forest. There was no sign of her leaving.

The argument was also continuing inside the Jewel.

[May is a good child.]

[But, she is targeting Lyle and others isn’t she?]

The one who reacted coldly at the Fifth’s mutter was the Third.

[That child also has her reason.]

[Are you saying it's fine to let the Jewel get taken away because of that? Aren't you forgetting the objective of Lyle and others?]

The Fourth was also cold.

[She will understand if we talk to her!]

[Your voice won't reach so you can't even talk to her.]

The Sixth was exasperated.

[You guys, think more seriously!]

[The answer is clear. If she is chasing after Lyle then he can only fight her. Rather than getting pursued by a qilin forever from here on, it'll be better to face her here. —A disaster that is befalling us ought to be driven away, Fifth.]

The Seventh said that there was no other choice but to defeat her in this situation.

If it was a way to defeat her then we had it.

I could bring the fight into a close quarter combat and hit her with the silver great sword.

There was difference of strength between us but, but I would be able to manage somehow using the silver weapon.

If even the silver great sword didn't do the job, then that was it.

[—Lyle, May is a good child.]

[This guy, when he understand that he cannot persuade us, he is moving to cajole Lyle instead.]

It was rare for the Sixth to call the Fifth as this guy.

The Fifth was unlike his usual self. There was desperation coming out from him somewhere.

[I found that child inside a forest.]

[Oi, don’t ignore me! Wa, wait, human’s arm cannot be turned that wa—HIGYAAAAA!]

I heard the Sixth’s scream. After a while the inside of the Jewel became quiet.

And then, the Fifth began to talk about his past with the qilin.

***

—Fredericks encountered the qilin inside a forest.

Fredericks faced a large army in a war and came out victorious. At the end he was covered with mud and blood.

His subordinate guided him inside a forest.

Their campsite was set up inside the forest.

The provision there was disturbed—by an injured qilin.

His subordinates were greatly troubled.

They were against a qilin.

It was the beast of good fortune. But it came this far and ran out of strength. Now it couldn’t move.

"It’s still young."

"What should be done? From how it look like, it won’t even let us treat it."

When his knight subordinates tried to approach, the young qilin would take out its small horn and threatened them.

Even though it was deeply wounded, it generated crackling light from its horn and exposed its hostility.

Its neck was wounded. It looked like it would die if it wasn’t treated.

"Back away. I’ll do it."

"Frederick-sama, it’s dangerous!"

Fredericks didn’t even listen to his subordinate. He approached the young qilin.

He young qilin attacked Fredericks.

The lightning magic attack hit Fredericks, but he endured it while treating the qilin.

"You’re still energetic. You’ll get better soon if you’re like this."

When the young qilin stopped attacking, Fredericks continued cleaning the wound and applying medicine.

He bandaged the wound and checked the qilin’s state.

"Looks like you can’t stand. Guess I’ll put you on a carriage and bring you to the mansion."

One of the subordinates were excited hearing Fredericks’s words.

"Fredericks-sama has obtained a qilin! With this the prosperity of Walt House is assured!"

Fredericks replied calmly.

"Developing the territory is the job of me and you all. Don’t rely on anybody else. Also, I forbid anyone from telling other people about this child."

Fredericks talked to the young qilin while his subordinates were perplexed.

"You'll get better soon. Don't worry."

Fredericks then brought it back to the mansion and looked after the qilin—.

***

[—She is a kind child. She always rubbed her forehead on me when I approached. It was also difficult when we parted. She looked back at me many times.]

I had faintly noticed since before that the Fifth would become talkative when it was about animal.

But, this time I got the feeling that he was more emotional than normal.

Sometimes his voice would be thick with emotion like he was going to cry. I couldn't imagine that Fifth would become like this.

I grabbed the Jewel and rolled it with my fingertips.

It was the sign of rejection.

To that the Fifth was,

[You demon!]

In the first place, the current me had no option of helping May.

I was being pursued and my life targeted by her.

There were only two choices. Running away with everything we had, or fighting her with everything we had.

If it was from close range, I would be able to land a hit with the silver great sword.

If it was from long range, I could snipe her with the silver bow.

If I wanted to win it would be with these two options.

Aria’s hand shook me while I was pondering.

"Lyle, what’re we going to do now? Are we going to defeat it like usual?"

Aria’s gaze turned toward my Jewel.

In respond to that Eva was,

"No! Don’t say such an ill-omened thing."

Eva didn’t want to fight against the qilin.

Miranda was also the same but,

"—I heard that qilin moves in group. Even if that child is the only one we met, it will be troublesome if she has comrades nearby. If possible I want to escape from here somehow."

In that moment, May was rushing past us above.

The trees were swaying hard from the gust of wind.

"Will we be able to escape from that?"

How would we escape from an opponent that was flying around freely in the sky?

If I could handle the silver great sword or bow more skillfully, I could also pick the option of injuring her without killing her and then escaped but—right now that was impossible.

If I held back, it would be who got killed.

It didn’t look like we would be able to move for a while.

I was also thinking of moving when it was night, but then the Fifth yelled with a voice as though he had gotten a great idea.

[Lyle, “that”! Right now is exactly the time to use that!]

I pushed my forehead on the ground.

"—That huh."

My Art that I didn’t want to use if possible.

It was great that I manifested the second stage but, it was an Art that made me hesitated to use it.

[When are you going to use it if not now! You can do it if it’s you! If it’s with that, I’ll also be able to persuade May directly.]

The Fifth was more passionate than usual.

I could guess just how serious he was for the sake of the qilin he was taking care in the past.

But, I wished that he would also think of my feeling.

My Art’s second stage had a really strict requirement for its use.

Aria shook me again.

"Hey, what’s with you. You suddenly mentioned something."

I covered my mouth with my hand. I regretted letting out my voice.

There wasn’t any meaning to it but, I believed it was careless of me.

Or rather, how many days it had been since we entered the forest?

I was getting really tired.

I could clearly feel my body and also my mind getting exhausted.

"No, I was thinking if I'll be able to manage to do something about this. Right, you see, using my Art—if it goes well, then we might be able to get through this situation."

"Then say that from the start. You often stay silent like this. Just use your Art right away and solve this."

Aria was speaking angrily in small voice. I averted my face.

Miranda seemed to be curious about my gesture.

"If I remember right Lyle's Art is—"

The first stage of my Art was called "Experience". It was an Art that was active constantly.

It was an Art that sped up "growth" to happen. I didn't know whether it was a lie or not.

Originally, an Art was divided into three stages.

The first stage came when you first manifested your Art.

At the second stage, the Art demonstrated even more effectiveness and utility.

The third stage was the ultimate form of your own Art.

You could think of the Art becoming even stronger and more convenient as the stage advanced.

There was also special case like Clara.

A type that didn't have any stage when it manifested.

And then, in my case—.

"It's practically a different Art. It looks like a special type."

Eva cut in with a voice that was full of curiosity.

"A special type? That’s a bit interesting. Or rather, if it can overcome this situation, then I’ll want to rely on Lyle’s Art. Doing something like killing a qilin is no good."

Miranda ignored Eva who was like that and asked for more detailed explanation about the Art to me.

"But, from your expression there is a problem with the Art isn’t it? There are various types of Arts, so I heard that there is also type that cannot be used if the requirements aren’t satisfied."

As general rule, typically a person would only manifest a single Art.

Thinking about that, I who manifested a different type of Art for my second stage might get a good deal.

I didn’t know whether the first stage had any effect or not, but the second stage definitely had an effect.

It could be used if the requirements were satisfied.

The day I decided to fight Celes, the second stage was liberated as though it was recognizing me.

But, the Art that was liberated was horrible.

When an Art manifested, the person would learn its name and the way to use it.

It would come to mind like a flash of idea but—.

"The Art’s name is Connection. It’s an Art that enable me to communicate with the mind of other people."

Aria tilted her head in puzzlement at my explanation.

"That’s all?"

She must have thought that the Art would be able to do something more amazing.

She looked disappointed.

Miranda was the one who got her attention hooked.

"I want to hear more about it. In what way you can communicate with the other’s mind?"

"If the person is within the effective range of my Art, then I can converse with them even if we’re far away. You can think of it as words being sent to your head directly. We can talk even in a distance where our voice cannot reach. It’s also possible to share our sight with each other—I think."

Miranda was silent, but her eyes were strangely lively.

It seemed she had instantly noticed just how amazing my Art was.

But, Eva was finding fault at me who wasn’t being clear.

"You should try using your manifested Art. Sometimes there are people who forget the way to use their Art. That will be a waste."

—I couldn’t test it even if I wanted.

The reason?

There was something that had to be done beforehand with the mind communication partner.

I wouldn’t need to worry like this if it was a convenient Art that could connect me to anyone without caring who it was.

I would even teach everyone about it if that was the case.

"It’s impossible."

"Just why’s that?"

Eva angrily asked the reason, so I honestly told her the requirement.

"—I’ll need to do something beforehand with the one I’ll use Connection with. If I don’t do that, the line of mana between both sides won’t be connected. In addition, once this line is severed, I’ll need to do the same thing again to establish the connection."

I wanted you to imagine a line that was like a fine thread made from mana connecting both sides.

Similar like with Monica.

In that fellow’s case, even if the line was severed, it would connect again immediately even without me doing anything in particular.

A part of me thought of it as convenient but, was it just my imagination that for some reason it felt like it was entangling me so I couldn’t get away?

Eva thought for a bit, and then she went red until even the elf’s long ears. She muttered then.

"Eh, ah—could it be that’s"

Aria didn’t seem to have realized.

"What? Tell us about that requirement already. It’ll be a waste if that kind of convenient Art isn’t used."

Miranda smiled meaningfully at Aria’s obvious thought.

"Aria is really stupid. Your stupidity can put up a good match against Shannon."

"Wh, why are you saying that?"

"Lyle won’t use an Art this convenient. And then, think about the reason why he wouldn’t tell us about it. Don’t you think that there’s a problem with that “act” to connect the line of mana?"

Aria saw Eva who went red until her ears and her own face was also gradually reddening.

"Co, could it be—"

I resolved myself and told the three of the Art’s requirement to use.

"Yes, it’s by a kiss."

"Eh?"

"Eh? I, it’s that?"

Eva and Aria were suddenly surprised, but Miranda said "Oh, that’s disappointing".

What’s with their reaction?

"—Don’t act exaggeratedly just because of something like that. You made us misunderstand."

Eva was angry. I couldn’t help but feel bewildered.

"But it’s a kiss you know? Not the light one, but doing it in a more adult way you know?"

Hearing that Aria was,

"Aa~, of course that would make you a bit troubled. Well, I guess it’s certainly hard to say?"

Miranda was smiling.

"It’s no problem. I’ll welcome it anytime. Lyle, how about practicing it with me?"

She approached me. I twisted my body to escape but, I couldn’t make any movement here.

"Tha, that’s no good. A kiss has to be treated with more importance—I think."

Eva was grinning broadly.

"Lyle is unexpectedly innocent. Putting that aside, the problem is how can this matter get resolved using that Art to communicate with the mind of other?"

It was my Art.

What I thought as possible should be doable.

A voice came from inside the Jewel.

[Leave it to me. If Lyle and May are connected, I’ll persuade her then.]

—It would depend on the Fifth though.

In case we were connected with my Art, the other side should be able to connect with the Jewel too.

I got the feeling that it was possible.

Aria was deep in thought while,

"Wait a second? That means, Lyle has to kiss that girl isn’t it? In the first place, is that possible?"

Yes! —That would be difficult.

While I was at my wits’ end, the other three were also making a complicated expression.

My Art couldn’t be used without kissing. Its peculiarity was too strong.

***

—May was running on the sky while watching the ground carefully.

She would descend to the ground if there was a strange movement and checked it.

In most case, the cause would be animal or monster.

There was also monster that got out from dungeon and went wild from having excessive strength, but she defeated all of them with one attack before returning to the sky and repeated her search again.

"Where—where is he?"

In order to save her benefactor Fredericks, May was searching around with bloodshot eyes.

Then, she sensed Fredericks’s strong presence inside the forest.

"Fredericks!"

She forcefully changed her direction midair and dashed toward the ground. May’s body was wrapped in lightning that brightly illuminated the night sky.

She landed without reducing her speed. The ground was gouged as though she crashed on it.

The surrounding grasses and plants were blown away. A gaping hole was created inside the forest.

When the fluttering dust was clearing up, the figure of Lyle that was dirty with soil was there.

"How wild. What’re you going to do if the Jewel is destroyed?"

Lyle spoke frivolously. May turned a sharp gaze at him.

"Jewel? I feel like I’ve heard it from somewhere. —No, that’s right, I remember. That rock that look like a blue jewel, it’s a tool to memorize Art. Fredericks also had that."

In the past, a blue Gem was hanging on Fredericks’s neck.

Its appearance had changed with the decoration attached to it now, but that wasn’t all.

"I didn’t notice. It’s like a completely different thing.

"Yeah, it has become a bit more convenient, or rather it has been ranked up into a cursed item."

May transformed from a qilin into her human form.

May who became human glared at Lyle.

"Cursed? Is Fredericks imprisoned because of that? —You humans are too cold toward your own family."

In respond to May’s words Lyle was,

"It was the Fifth—Fredericks who was cold toward his family."

May was irritated by Lyle’s misunderstanding.

"You really don’t know anything. Or perhaps, it’s forgotten by the passing of time? Fredericks held a great kindness toward his family."

Lyle’s expression looked doubtful.

But, it didn’t matter for Mei.

"I wonder what you know? If you release Fredericks, then I promise that I won’t take your life at least."

There was a great difference of strength between qilin and human.

It was because their rank as living thing was different.

May talked condescendingly. Lyle faced her with a serious face.

"—You already understand right? The Fifth is dead. Fredericks has died."

May was enraged hearing that. Her horn grew out from her forehead.

Her body emitted electricity. It made crackling sound to the surrounding.

"—Don’t say it."

"Several generations has passed. We humans have shorter life than you qilin. That’s why—"

"DON’T SAY ITTTTT!"

May yelled. At the same time lightning fell in the area.

Trees were blown away. The damage to the surrounding was expanding greatly.

Lyle said toward Mei who was like that.

"—How about I send you to meet him?"

It was a sweet invitation.

May too understood that Fredericks had already died and she couldn’t meet him.

But, Fredericks’s presence was right over there.

She couldn’t hold herself back.

"Eh?"

The lightning stopped. The surrounding was filled with the smell of the scorched trees.

Crackling sound like something was burning could also be heard.

"I’ll let you meet with Fredericks."

"—Re, really?"

Lyle showed a smile.

"Yeah, really. In exchange—can you let me kiss you? If possible a deep one where our tongues are entwined with each other. It’ll be helpful if you allow that. Oi, wait. Wait! I’m not joking. You’ll be able to meet him for real by doing that!"

May was clad in lightning that was even more intense than before. Her horn grew even longer into a thorny shape.

"You made fun of me huh. You intended to trick me by using Fredericks as excuse. Unforgivable. I absolutely won’t forgive you, you HUMANNNNN!"

Lyle pressed his right hand on his face. He made a hopeless expression.

"I never thought that it will go smoothly from the start though."

Even he himself didn’t thing that thing would go like what he said.

That was enough to make May think that in other word, he was making fun of her.

"You humans are calling us as divine beast but, don’t think that those divine beasts won’t kill human. Even though I was thinking to

forgive you because you’re Fredericks’s descendant—you’re the only one who I absolutely won’t forgive. I’ll tear you to pieces!"

May was enraged—.

Chapter 95 – Connection

I made her angry just as expected.

I took a stance with my saber while looking at May who was enraged in front of me.

An exasperated voice came from the Jewel.

[You should be a bit more clearer about the premise.]

[I got the wrong idead that you wanted to anger her. I can’t even give you ten points for this.]

[Lyle, are you really determined to do this!?]

[The Fifth is kind? It seems that a qilin can’t understand the subtlety of human relationship.]

[Even so, she is splendidly angered.]

They said whatever they liked but, it was just like usual so I ignored them.

In the first place the difficulty was too high.

What should I do to make a line of "kiss with me" became a success?

It was impossible no matter how you thought about it.

No matter how well I persuaded her, if at the end I said "Kiss with me"—the talk would break down eventually.

"In the end, it can’t be solved without using brute force huh."

The lightning settled down and silent returned to the surrounding.

My ear was ringing after the explosive sound.

It felt like May’s words were coming from far away.

When May took a step forward, she was before my eyes at the next instant with her fist raised up.

"Tsu!"

I dodged in panic. May’s fist hit the tree behind me.

The tree was punched and sent flying. Cold sweat was coming out after seeing that.

I stood up while wiping the sweat with left hand. Then May was slowly turning her face toward me.

"It’s hard that I can’t go with my full power. Even though I can turn you into ash instantly as long as I’ve obtained your necklace—it’s really unfortunate."

Her eyes looked extremely chilly.

It felt like I would shiver seeing that emotionless face.

A qilin’s strength—even in human form, her strength was in different dimension from us human.

But—it wasn’t at Celes’s level.

"I cannot lose here. My bad but, I can’t give you the Jewel. I need it for my objective after all."

"You’ll sacrifice other people for your own objective like that. You humans are always like that. You’re all beyond help."

The Fifth sounded sad hearing May’s words.

[May, don’t force yourself.]

The Fifth—I wished you would worry about me more rather than May.

May headed toward me but, she vanished from my field of vision instantly.

The next instant,

[Behind you!]

I hurriedly rolled away from that spot hearing the Fifth's words to dodge and stood up. Then May's fist hit the ground.

She turned only her eyes toward me,

"Scampering around like that, how troublesome."

She pulled out her fist from the ground and her figure vanished again.

The Fifth gave me instruction.

[Lyle, fundamentally if she vanish from in front of you, then think that she'll come at you from outside your field of vision. Your judgment will be late if you rely only on Arts. I'll give you instruction.]

The instruction of the Fifth who read ahead of May's movement was terrifyingly accurate. I was able to dodge May's attack easily.

"How're you able to predict her movement this accurately?"

I asked while dodging. Then the Sixth answered in irritation.

[That's because it was the Fifth who taught this qilin the way to fight. He never taught us anything though.]

With this another terrible story appeared.

The Fifth complained.

[It’ll be strange if I make you fight in the same way with me when your build is bigger ! Lyle, she’ll come from below next. That May, her habit from the past is still remaining.]

May was coming at me not with technique, but with brute force.

My eyes were getting used to her.

And then, I also came to understand the habit of May’s fighting style.

My breathing was getting rough, even so I regained my composure.

In contrast—May was the one who started looking irritated and impatient.

"Why isn’t my attack landing. Why!?"

I smiled while,

"You’re just brute forcing this. Your technique is poor huh."

In the first place qilin didn’t need anything like hand-to-hand fighting technique, but May was gritting her teeth.

She must be irritated from getting made fun of.

"Someone like you—Fredericks was far, far far stronger just so you know!"

She childishly yelled. Tears were gathering on her eyes.

May leaped at me and launched a spinning kick.

My body wouldn’t be able to endure if I blocked it, so I dodged in a hair’s breadth and tried to grapple May’s body to p push her down—.

"DON’T TOUCH MEEEE!"

She forcefully threw me away.

She grabbed my arm and forcefully threw me. I executed an ukemibreak-fall when hitting the ground.

When I stood up, I could see May’s palm right near me.

The hand stretched out to tightly hold my head. I caught that arm and,

"With this!"

Blue flame burst out from my body.

I used the First’s Art and threw May on the ground with all my strength.

May didn’t even execute an ukemi. She was dumbfounded.

"—Why? Even though I’m stronger"

The Fifth’s sad voice came.

[May, I didn’t teach you martial arts because I want you to do something like this. I taught you because I want you to protect yourself.]

May seemed to hear the Fifth’s sad voice. She frowned and leaped up from that spot, taking distance from me.

The horn on May’s forehead was sinking in.

The Fifth yelled seeing htat.

[Lyle, dodge!]

May thrust her fist forward. A golden horn grew from there.

"I’ll get hit if I dodge carelessly."

I focused in front of May’s attack that was filled with sharp killing intent.

And then—.

"Warp."

I muttered. The Sevent’s Art instantly moved my body although it was only for a short range.

The Seventh was delighted.

[Lyle, good job succeeding! How’s that, my Art is amazing right!?]

Certainly it was amazing but, the distance that could be traveled was really short.

It was really convenient but—Warp was an Art that also had a lot of problematic points.

After I teleported behind May, I could dodge the attack but—this was really tiring.

The mana consumption was also great. The currently me couldn’t use this often.

May must be flustered because I vanished from in front of her instantly.

She couldn’t stop her momentum and tumbled forward. She then got up and looked at me with her eyes opened wide.

May was flustered that she was dodged.

"Instantly—how?"

It was an Art that was hard to use but, I was glad it succeeded.

With this it felt like I could also use it for bluffing.

"It’s an Art. Did you forget that this thing is a Gem? This thing doesn’t only contain Fredericks. It also memorize the Arts of my ancestors."

May gritted her teeth when I flaunted the Jewel. She headed toward me once more.

But, her step was shallow. She might be staying vigilant.

May slashed with the horn growing out from her hand.

I parried that attack with my saber.

The saber would easily snap if it clashed against the horn, so I really only pushed to change the attack’s direction.

Just with that, sparks scattered from the saber and it snapped.

"It snapped again."

I discarded the saber’s handle and took a stance. There May slashed at me.

The violent slash that was only her swinging her horn around was different from Celes. I could dodge it easily.

If it was like this, facing Celes was far scarier.

I realized deeply how inhuman Celes who was even stronger than qilin was.

I grasped the Jewel with my right hand.

[Lyle, you mustn’t cut her! You get it, absolutely don’t do it!]

The Fifth pressed his wish to me. I muttered "yes, yes" inside my heart while—materializing the silver great sword.

Perhaps because the Jewel was unstable, the way it struggled was more horrible than usual.

Even when I grasped its handle with both hands, it raged around annoyingly.

"What's that? I don't know. I don't know about something like that!"

May was in confusion, so I explained while pretending to be composed.

"This is the Jewel's power. The memories of the ancestors are inside this. That's the answer."

May couldn't accept it. She leaped at me.

I fixed my grip on the great sword, and using the flat of the sword—I swung it from left to right horizontally in a big way to deal a blow.

The attack that was swung in a way to not hit May mowed down the trees in front of me like a storm.

May was also sent flying. She hit a rock and slid down until she reached the ground, sitting there.

I too had used up practically all my mana from the attack just now.

The silver great sword that the First left behind was powerful, but it took away almost all of the user's mana.

It was a weapon for one hit kill.

I returned the silver great sword back into Jewel. I then felt the blue flame vanishing from my body.

It was hard to even stand.

May was looking at me while crying.

"Just how can I lose. I have become strong. I become strong in order to meet Fredericks—and yet, why!"

"You’re strong. But, I can deal with it if I can see how you’ll move next."

The Third was laughing at my words.

[The opponent couldn’t display her full strength also played a big part of it though. But, Lyle who can carry it out is also amazing.]

I could feel her holding back in order to not destroy the Jewel.

May shook her head.

"That’s a lie. How can you predict my movement? Something like this never happened until now."

May couldn’t accept it. I turned toward her and showed off the Jewel in my grasp.

"The Fifth—Fredericks taught me."

May shook her head hearing my explanation.

Her face said that she couldn’t believe it.

"Lie. That’s a lie. There’s no way Fredericks will betray me. Because, he promised. HE promised—that we will meet again!"

May sobbed. Her wordings became childish when I noticed.

[May, I was at fault. —Lyle, tell her.]

I conveyed the Fifth’s words to May.

"This is his message for you. I’m sorry that I lied. When we parted, you didn’t look like you want to leave so I lied, he said."

May leaked out tears while pointing the qilin’s horn growing from her right hand to me.

"You’re lying again. You humans are—Fredericks’s family was cold to Fredericks. They didn’t try to understand him at all! They used him, complained at him—who’ll believe the words of the like of you humans!"

"What’re you saying—"

The clothes that May was wearing expanded bigger and enveloped her body. She returned to her qilin form.

It seemed that May still had stamina remaining.

"Even though I’m at my limit."

May stepped firmly on the ground, lowered her face, and pointed her horn at me.

She planned to collide on me with all her strength to send me flying.

"Are you planning to blow me away together with the Jewel?"

"—I’ll free Fredericks. I’ve to pay back my debt. That’s why—That’s why, wait for me, Fredericks."

It seemed she wouldn’t listen to me.

I sighed.

"You, have you forgotten? I’m not alone."

The moment May charged, a red light rushed to in front of me.

The one who blocked the sharp qilin’s horn was Aria who hardened her short spear to have metallic color.

She swung down the spear to May, but the hardened short spear was the one that broke instead.

However, thanks to that the attack was diverted and I was saved.

Aria quickly carried me under her arm and withdraw from this place. May then chased after us slightly behind.

Aria was complaining at me.

"That was too close! Just why did you volunteer to become the bait even though it’s impossible!?"

"It has to be me. After all May won’t even pay attention to Aria or the others."

"May—is it that girl’s name?"

Aria was traveling quickly inside the forest. She was heading to the place that was prepared to capture May.

When we arrived, Miranda and Eva were already waiting there.

After I and Aria passed through that place where the two were hiding, May ran into there a bit later.

The sound of her steps on the ground was really loud.

The tree branches that bumped into her were sent flying. The shape of her hooves was printed firmly to the ground.

"Let’s leave the rest to those two."

After I muttered that, Aria looked back in worry.

"Will those two be alright?"

***

—Lyle and Aria passed through. Eva was waiting for the signal.

The two of them were hiding with some distance from each other. They were facing each other.

With Miranda’s signal, Eva strongly pulled the string that was tied to a tree.

It stretched out the net created from Miranda’s string that was prepared in the route of the qilin.

Right after that, the qilin rushed into the net. The trees that the net was tied up to were making groaning sound.

They used several trees so that the trap wouldn’t be destroyed easily. It stopped the qilin’s momentum.

But, the trap looked like it was going to be destroyed.

"So it can’t be stopped with this. Qilin is amazing."

Eva was wondering whether she should thank Lyle for being able to see this from nearby, or should she got angry to him for angering a qilin.

And then their next plan began right away.

"Don’t resent us for this."

Magic was used to create earth wall around the qilin.

The wall that couldn’t even be used to buy time was instantly blown away by the qilin.

But, what they wanted to do wasn’t to capture her.

It was to block her sight even if it was only for a moment.

"Wily woman!"

Eva yelled at Miranda.

"That’s a horrible way of calling me."

Miranda leaped out from behind a bush. At the same time several earth puppets jumped toward the qilin.

Golems in the shape of animal, insect, human arm—multiple golems were holding down the qilin.

The animal shaped golems bit at the qilin with their fangs, but it didn’t deal a single scratch on the qilin’s scale.

Miranda manipulated the threads stretching out from her fingertips to manipulate multiple golems.

"I’ll capture you again."

However the qilin swung around her head, breaking the golems that were created from soil. They became sand and crumbled.

"—Don’t think you can capture me with something like this!"

The qilin’s voice was the same with the girl they met.

"So that girl really is this qilin."

Eva was surprised while also feeling happy to learn that qilin could transform into human.

She went to assist Miranda while feeling happy to be able to obtain actual experience and not just mere knowledge.

Eva threw a cylinder object. It hit the ground and produced smoke.

The thin smoke was created using ingredient that had horrible smell and stinging the eyes.

"Uwah, the smell reach until here."

Even though her face twisted from the smell, the qilin hit the ground with her front legs, causing wind to blow violently and dispersed the smoke instantly.

The moment she thought that it ended too quickly, a string was entangling around the qilin’s neck when she noticed.

The sticky string was stretching from Miranda’s hand.

Other than that, strings were also stretching out from the place where the golems jumped out from.

The golems were sent out in order to attach the strings on her from the start.

"They won’t come off so easily."

When Miranda pulled the strings, the qilin swung around her neck.

Miranda was easily swung around in the air.

"You acted so cockily like that and yet you got swung around so easily like that!"

Miranda was irritated by those words. She changed her posture midair.

When the string caught on the trees, she used it as fulcrum and changed her direction midair like a pendulum.

She severed the string stretching from her hand and manifested new string to entangle the qilin’s neck again.

"Just watch quietly!"

Like that she increased the number of strings tying up the qilin’s neck. There the qilin rampaged.

"Mere strings like this!"

But, the strings entangled even more the more she rampaged. Furthermore it didn’t stop there.

Sparking sounds could be heard from some time ago.

Eva looked at the fluffy strings entangled on each other that fell on her shoulder.

The strings burned up when it touched her body and vanished.

The moment they burned, they stole the opponent’s mana.

(This woman, she’s amazing as expected.)

She called herself all-purpose jack of all trades, while possessing a great number of moves.

And then, it was unknown whether he was aware of it but, the one who Lyle relied the most after Novem was Miranda.

(—But, as I thought I hate this woman.)

May who was covered with sticky strings and couldn’t use her mana like she wanted was struggling.

Miranda who finally landed on the ground was breathing heavily.

"Ho, how’s that"

Miranda captured the qilin while flying around inside the forest. Eva sent her an applause that wasn’t filled with any feeling.

"Congratulations. That’s amazing. I’m moved. You look completely like a spider woman."

Miranda glared at Eva.

"There are unnecessary words there. Quickly go call Lyle and Aria."

Their plan was to lure May into the place where they prepared their trap.

During that time, it was Lyle’s job to buy time.

"We came back already."

Aria came while carrying Lyle under her arm.

Lyle looked really tired while being carried pathetically.

Eva sighed.

"Lyle, you should make yourself look a bit better. You make the scene feel sloppy even though we finally reach the climax after great pain."

"Even I want to do so if possible."

Lyle asked Aria to put him down and approached May.

She neighed threateningly while pointing her horn to Lyle.

Lyle faced May who was like that and started persuading her—.

***

May was directing hostility toward me.

"You’re still energetic even after all this. Qilin is really amazing."

Aria was on her guard against May.

Miranda was also similar.

Eva was—if it had to be said which, she was watching us with deep interest.

She was holding expectation toward the development from here.

The Seventh looked at May who was restrained by Miranda’s strings in admiration.

[She captured her while taking consideration to make her powerless? Although she had been weakened by Lyle beforehand, but still as expected from aunt’s great grandchild.]

I wondered how was the Seventh evaluating his aunt—Milleia-san inside himself.

The Sixth said that she was a kind girl who was blind but possessed mystic eyes but—it seemed that the Seventh’s impression was completely different.

Putting that aside, right now,

"Let’s talk. I don’t plan to harm you. But, I just want to talk."

May glared at me with rough nasal breathing. It was clear that she was agitated.

I brought my face closer and whispered lowly so the other three couldn’t hear.

"Fredericks want to talk."

I said that and dangled the Jewel in front of May.

The Fifth talked.

[May, just once is fine. Do as Lyle say. I don’t want you to be harmed even more than this. I don’t want you and Lyle to fight. I beg you please—listen to my wish.]

I didn’t know whether that voice of the Fifth reached her or not but, May’s horn slowly sunk in.

She turned her face toward me,

"—What should I do?"

"Returning to our first talk, I have an Art. Connection—it's an Art that make it possible for communication of mind. A line of mana is needed in order to do that. The kiss is the way to do that."

Even though I was the one saying those words, and yet I was thinking, it couldn't be helped that other wouldn't believe such thing.

The Sixth often said [Before deceiving your opponent, trick yourself to believe it completely!].

But, in regard to this I thought, this is impossible huh.

May pondered for a while, then,

"Okay. Actually I wanted to kiss with Fredericks though."

"Eh? You two were in that kind of relationship?"

The Fifth was getting criticized inside the Jewel.

[Eh, the relationship of you two was that far?]

[That's appalling. Don't tell me, you harbored desire toward animal?]

[Don't you think it can't be helped that I ran away from home? Or rather, what kind of face do you think I should make after learning my parent's fetish?]

[Everyone here feel the same. After all we're family. I too cannot hide my shock to learn that grandfather has that kind of hobby.]

The Fifth was desperately making excuse toward the criticize from the other four.

[You idiots! I ain’t taking care of animals due to that kind of impure feeling! My feeling is purer. Besides, among animals many species greet by kissing! Why the hell are you guys smirking huh! Are you listening to me!?]

They were making fun of the Fifth who was desperately making excuse.

Even though it would be better if he stopped, the Fifth was getting worked up, that was why he was being made fun of.

May looked at me.

"Do it quickly."

"—Eh? Aa, right. But, err that’s"

May extended her neck toward my face.

—Wait a second.

Could it be, she planned to kiss me in that form?

With qilin’s form?

It was beyond my expectation.

Aria seemed to guess what I wanted to say. She hurried me up with a red face.

"Come on, get on with it."

"No, but!"

Miranda was also smiling, but there was something in her that wouldn’t accept any argument.

"Lyle really has it hard. Now, let’s finish it quickly."

Eva looked dissatisfied but,

"A love romance with qilin is also hard to discard but, Lyle’s heroine is Novem alone isn’t it? Let’s do the kissing scene here with this qilin form."

Urged by the three—I ended up kissing with May in her qilin form.

The Fifth was angry.

[Lyle, what’re you dissatisfied about May!?]

I really couldn’t understand the Fifth’s feeling.

May’s tongue entered my mouth but, *goboh!*

It felt like that.

May’s large tongue entered inside my mouth. How should I say it—this wasn’t a kiss.

But, it seemed my Art recognized it as a kiss.

A line of mana was formed, then May’s head slumped down.

I also fell on my knees. There Aria caught my body.

***

Unlike usual, I was pulled into the Jewel forcefully.

It wasn’t the room of the round table there, but the memory room of the Fifth.

Inside the room that had nothing, the Fifth was waiting alone. He sent a smiling face this way.

It wasn’t directed toward me—but toward May.

"Fredericks!"

[You’ve grown big, May.]

May who was in the form of qilin changed into human while running. She leaped toward the Fifth.

Her speech became even more childish than what should be fitting for the age of her appearance.

"I’ve grown big. I’ve grown strong you know!"

[Yeah, I was watching. You’ve grown big. And you were also strong.]

The Fifth hugged May, and then he kindly patted her head.

They were like father and daughter—they looked completely like a parent and child.

It couldn’t be helped that the Sixth was angry like this.

"Fredericks, your promise—your promise with me"

The Fifth scratched his cheek bashfully. And then he placed his hand on May’s shoulder.

[My bad. I lied to you because you didn’t look like you would leave. At that time, I understood that we wouldn’t be able to meet anymore. I lied to you knowing that. I was I the wrong.]

May shook her head.

"No. It was because I couldn’t make it in time. Even though—even though I promised to become Fredericks’s wife."

When I went "Eh!?" hearing the talk of those two, the Fifth made a forced cough.

[Aa~, you mean that. I remember it.]

The Fifth’s memory was called out and the scenery of the surrounding was changing.

It was the animal shed that the Sixth showed me.

May was surprised seeing the surrounding.

She saw the animals around her,

"Michael—and also Angelo. There is also Maya. And Zelt too!"

May’s eyes sparkled. She approached the big dog she called Zelt and tried to touch it—she passed through it and froze saying "Ah".

She became tearful.

[This is inside my memory. I’m sorry, but you cannot touch them.]

A voice could be heard deeper inside the shed.

A young child—May looking like she was five years old was sitting on Fredericks’s lap.

She looked really happy.

The animals were also gathering around them. They looked like they wanted Fredericks to pay attention to them.

"Fifth, you’re really popular."

[Animals are really nice. They wash your heart clean.]

"Even though it would be better if you treasured your family more."

May glared at me when I said that.

"Don’t bully Fredericks! Everyone didn’t even know how much Fredericks was suffering, and yet they were like that—"

[May, it’s enough.]

It seemed that May knew something but, the Fifth stopped her from speaking further.

[I did it knowing what it mean. It was me who was cold toward my family. It can’t be helped even if I’m blamed.]

"But"

I honestly asked to the Fifth.

"Is there a reason?"

The Fifth looked at his past self who was surrounded by animals while,

[—After mama gave birth to me, she became unable to bear a child due to an accident. Father was devoted to mama alone, and the previous head the Third also died young with only one child. Anyway we had few relatives at that time.]

The Third’s child was one.

There was also how it was a bad era at that time but, it was painful for Walt House that he died young in war.

After that, the Fourth who succeeded the house also only had one child—it wouldn’t be strange even if the direct line perished anytime.

The Fifth was unlucky.

[Anyway we didn’t have enough relatives. That was why I chose the simplest solution. After all the quickest way to shut up the small feudal lords under my jurisdiction was by marriage.]

The Fourth became a baron due to the Third’s achievement. He entered a position where he had to lead the small feudal lords.

But, no matter which era, such thing was accompanied by jealousy it seemed.

A house that was the same rank with them until now was promoted.

The number of houses that couldn’t tolerate that wasn’t few. The governing wasn’t advancing like planned.

But, whether it was fortunate or unfortunate, the territory under the direct control of Walt House was developing well.

[The surrounding baron houses and viscount houses, and even the count further above them were hostile toward us. They insulted us as upstart. We had few allies then.]

"That’s—didn’t you think about the succession problem it might bring?"

Noble often met with succession problem.

To have many family members also meant that the seed of conflict would number just as many.

[I thought about it. Even so I decided to increase the number of ally. In fact it was a success. After all the children were united by having common enemy in me. You being here meant I had managed to protect the house. Though if my act is judged whether it’s good or evil, then it’s undoubtedly evil.]

May grabbed the Fifth’s arm.

"Fredericks isn’t evil. Besides, you actually—"

[I’m the worst. That was why, my children didn’t approach me. That’s all.]

The Fifth only said that as the last and didn’t touch this topic anymore.

Chapter 96 – Promise With Qilin

The Fifth’s memory room.

There, the days that Fredericks spent together with May was being replayed.

[Fredericks-sama, qilin is a symbol of prosperity but, I heard that it’ll be dangerous if it’s angered. So please, leave this matter to this humble me.]

A merchant came until the animal shed. Fredericks answered him while doing his work.

[I’ve told everyone to not come near here. If you too have passed through my mansion then you should have known that haven’t you?]

[Yes. But, this is an important matter so—]

[I see. I guess it’ll be better if I don’t do any business with your shop when you can’t keep your promise. Take him away.]

Fredericks’s subordinates dragged away the merchant.

[Plea, please wait! Fredericks-sama!]

When May’s head peeked out from her room, Fredericks showed a smile to her.

[It’s alright now.]

The Fifth and also May were watching that scene in nostalgia.

"You stopped doing business with him just because of this?"

[That wasn’t all. It was because he was a merchant who also did business with a hostile feudal lord. He was selling our information, so I already planned to cut off my relation with him.]

He had a proper reason but, the Fifth couldn’t be trusted when it was related to animal.

And then the scene changed to a talk between Fredericks and May.

The young May was smiling on Fredericks’s lap.

May declared to Fredericks with a wide smile.

[You know! I’ll become Fredericks’s wife.]

That was a wish of a child who didn’t understand anything.

Fredericks might be aware of that too. He responded to her with a smile.

[I see. That makes me happy. But, May is still young so let’s wait until you grow up.]

[You say that again. I’m telling you I’ll grow up quickly.]

May looked chagrined seeing her younger self.

She looked like she wanted to say something, but this was just a memory.

It would be meaningless even if she spoke.

That was why she conveyed her feeling toward the Fifth while crying.

"In the end, I couldn’t keep the promise."

The Fifth shook his head.

[We can meet like this. You returned back for me aren't you? I'm just a memory but, I'm happy being able to meet you again.]

"I'm sorry, Fredericks. I—made trouble for Fredericks again."

She must mean about her attacking us.

I who was treated as an outsider kept quiet but,

[I have something to talk about that. May, can you help Lyle?]

"Me? But, Fredericks's descendant is strong."

[He's strong but, he's still unreliable. It's only recently that he finally became decent. I want to train him from here on, and Lyle has to become even stronger. —There is a monster called Celes.]

When May heard that name,

"I've heard about that. If I remember right, it's the human who is recently running wild isn't it?"

[That fellow came from my family. I want to stop her no matter what. In order to do that, I want to borrow your strength. Can I ask you to do that?]

May looked at the Fifth's face, then she turned her gaze toward me.

And then after thinking for a bit,

"—Got it. That's fine. If I can be of help, then I'll accompany him just for a bit."

Just for a bit huh.

Even so that would be appreciated. While I was thinking so,

"Will fifty years be enough?"

Hearing May’s words, I remembered. Come to think of it, this child was a qilin.

She was a little girl at the Fifth’s era, right now she was in an age of a girl growing to become a woman.

I couldn’t think of her using human’s senses.

The Fifth nodded happily.

[Yeah, I’m counting on you.]

May spoke bashfully.

"Can I come to meet you again?"

[Come anytime. Is what I want to say but unfortunately you can’t. But if you stay with Lyle, then there’ll also be a chance we can meet.]

"Okay!"

The figure of May who acted like an adult couldn’t be found there. She looked like a girl her age.

May turned around toward me.

"Err, your name is Lyle? Take care of me for fifty years from now."

"Eh? Ri, right?"

Seeing May’s smiling face, I wondered if it was okay for me to answer like that.

I was happy that a qilin would become my ally but, would everything be alright?

And then, May consulted me.

"Also, I have several conditions for helping you."

"What?"

"Actually I had just become independent. That’s why, I want a family. Give me Lyle’s seed. If I can’t receive it from Fredericks, then I’m fine with receiving it from Lyle who is his descendant."

I coughed in surprise.

[Aa~, now that you mention it, you also said something like that huh.]

"I asked mama a big favor to become independent. I understood that I won’t be able to meet with Fredericks but, I wanted to become an adult quickly. Because of that I also stopped by at Fredericks’s hometown once."

I was taken aback by May’s words.

"Ho, how was the situation there?"

When I asked her about my birthplace, May looked up and recalled while talking to me.

"H~m, I only got down on the ground a few times, so I didn’t know much in detail. I only stopped by because I felt nostalgic. But, I got a bad feeling there and left immediately.

The Fifth looked at me,

[Well, ask what you want to ask later. Putting that aside, Lyle—take care of May.]

"Please wait!"

[What?]

"No, please don’t ask back like you don’t know what I want to say. It’s about May. She said that she want my se, seed or something, that’s strange! I’m a human."

May looked at me and laughed.

"Eh? Lyle don’t know? There is only female among divine beasts you know?"

"Eh, is that so?"

The Fifth who loved animal was also knowledgeable about that and explained to me.

[There is a lot of stories about divine beast bringing fortune to human right? That’s because they’re searching for human male to be their pair.]

"Bu, but, I’ve never heard anything like that from the story of other divine beasts."

Mai talked nonchalantly.

"There is also a lot of pattern where the human male doesn’t know that their wife is a divine beast. There’re also a lot of comrades who are blending and living in human society. Also, the turf of other divine beasts is in different place."

"Tu, turf?"

More importantly, it was shocking that divine beasts were blending into human society.

When I looked at May, I was uneasy whether they were really blending in or not.

[In Bahnseim the majority of divine beasts is qilin. There is also divine beast in sea, like whale for example, you'll be able to hear the story if you go there.]

"But!"

[No "if" or "but"! Divine beast is that kind of living thing, and May has chosen you. That's all there is to it. Just so you know, from where I'm standing, I'm glad it's you.]

"I was also surprised by Lyle. He looks like he'll be able to give me a strong child, I think I'll want three children at the very least."

Thre, three children!

[May's children huh. Surely they'll be cute children. Even so, I'm glad our talk is concluded well. Lyle, good for you.]

Wa, was it good?

Could something like this be accepted?

—While I was at my wits' end, both May and the Fifth were looking at me with puzzled expression.

Was I the strange one here?

The Fifth ignored me and talked to May.

[Also May, about my presence—I want you to keep what happened here a secret.]

***

—Aria laid down the unconscious Lyle on the ground.

The three of them moved Lyle and qilin from the place where they fought and hid in order to protect them.

Light shined into the forest.

The dawn was coming.

Lyle who was laid down using his luggage as a pillow looked like he was having a nightmare.

"Is he really okay? I don’t understand why he fainted even though he is doing communication of mind."

The qilin also fainted. She was quiet right now.

Miranda restrained the qilin once more and continued her vigilance.

"Perhaps he is in the middle of persuading her? There’s also a possibility of failure but, right now we can only believe in Lyle."

Eva took out a memo from her belonging and wrote down various things.

It must be for writing down song and story theme.

Aria was exasperated by her act.

"You’re focusing on song even at this kind of time? Stop that."

"Even I am worried. But, it’s important to quickly jot down the memo. Besides, this is because I believe in Lyle. If it’s Lyle then surely he will accomplish it."

Aria was slightly surprised at Eva’s words.

"That’s unexpected. I thought that you would be more detached. I was wondering if perhaps you’re only thinking of Lyle as mere research subject."

"You’re also rude. I can’t deny that he is my research subject for song but, I’m not that heartless you know?"

She would surely search for the next subject if Lyle was no good.

She thought that Eva was like that, but it seemed Eva was earnest.

"I’m gambling my life on Lyle. Don’t you think that song and tale has that much worth?"

Miranda was on guard against the surrounding while saying to Eva.

"As I thought I can’t understand elf."

"It’s okay that you don’t understand us. I want to sing a tale with Lyle as the main character. It’ll be the best if it has happy end with Novem as the heroine."

Aria held a question toward Eva.

"Why are you supporting Novem? The time you know her is shorter compared to us isn’t it?"

Eva replied ambiguously at the simple question.

It seemed that even she herself didn’t know the reason.

"Does something like time matter in getting along with someone? Well, it’s because of instinct or feeling? Should I call it atmosphere, it’s fun when I’m with Novem, and it also makes me feel at ease."

Aria recalled their journey until now.

Novem was strangely—liked by the demi-human.

She saw her liked by demi-human regardless of their species.

Conversely, even though she was that much of a beauty, she was rarely approached by frivolous looking opposite sex.

Since she learned that Novem was keeping various secrets, she couldn’t help but feel that Novem was suspicious.

(Novem is really mysterious.)

Even Lyle had a lot of things that he didn’t know about Novem.

While the three of them were worrying about Lyle and the qilin who weren’t waking up, Miranda sighed.

"—This is the worst timing."

Eva put back her memo into her belonging and stood up while stretching herself.

"We made a lot of ruckus, so it can’t be helped."

Aria also stood up and took up a short sword.

Her short spear was destroyed by the qilin, and Lyle fainted so she couldn’t resupply with a new weapon.

These several days were also hard for them, so they didn’t even have any satisfactory rest.

Their body was tired.

Their supply was insufficient.

"The number is a lot."

The number of approaching footsteps was a lot.

Miranda looked at Lyle, and then her gaze turned toward the qilin.

"Now then, what should we do?"

It wouldn’t be impossible to carry Lyle and the qilin and ran away, but their accumulating fatigue was reaching the peak.

If they were asked if they could hold out in this place with just the three of them, the answer was it would be hard.

The commotion would become bigger if they forcefully broke through.

Now then, what to do now? While thinking that, Lyle opened his eyes.

"Lyle!"

Aria approached and called out. Then the qilin also opened her eyes.

It seemed she had no intention to struggle.

Aria helped Lyle to stand up. He was placing his hand on his face looking really tired.

"What’s the matter? Is the misunderstanding resolved?"

Aria showered him with questions. Lyle nodded slightly in respond.

"Yes. She said that she will join us."

Eva was shocked, and then she smiled.

"I was correct to bet my life on Lyle. To think that a qilin will be our comrade, that’s a good omen for us."

Miranda was concerned by the unenergetic Lyle while explaining the situation simply.

"Lyle, sorry to bring this up while you’re tired but, it seems we have made too much ruckus. People are gathering here. Can you use your Arts?"

Lyle stood up unsteadily, then he responded to Miranda.

"Yeah, I’m fine. Also, I want you to free May."

"There won’t be any problem doing that won’t it?"

"No problem. No, really how did it turn out like this."

Miranda was curious by Lyle's unclear statement but, she released the qilin—May from the strings she created.

When the strings came off and vanished, May shook her body to remove the remaining strings sticking on her body and returned to her human form.

"My body still feels sticky. Your strings are really persistent."

"I'm happy to hear that. More importantly, is it true that you'll become our comrade?"

"Yep. I'll stay together for around fifty years."

"—I see. Tell me more about the detail later."

Miranda judged that there was no danger from May and she turned back toward Lyle.

"Now then, what to do now, Lyle?"

Lyle put his hand on his chin and thought, after that he grasped the Jewel—.

***

On the sky.

It was cramped with four people getting on May's back.

The four of them snuggled close to each other while clinging on May's back. They were on the sky above the forest.

"Wait a second. This is higher than I imagined!"

Aria was yelling, but she also looked like she was having fun.

Miranda was looking on the ground calmly.

"Flying in the sky is really convenient. Feels like we'll be able to do various things with this. I'm looking forward to it."

Was she thinking of some scary things?

In contrast Eva was,

"A qilin but a white horse—yep, Lyle is the prince on the white horse. With Novem as the heroine, I'll be able to create several tales."

Everyone's tension seemed to be strange. Perhaps it was because they were tired.

May spoke in exasperation.

"Be quiet. Flying with four people on my back is hard."

It seemed she meant that it was hard to balance herself.

Apparently there was no problem with the weight.

"By the way, May—about that matter."

I whispered into May's ear. She then nodded firmly.

"I won't say anything. I've promised Fredericks too."

I felt relieved.

The ancestors's memory was resurrected in my blue Jewel—such thing couldn't be exposed to my comrades.

Celes was running wild with a yellow Jewel in her possession.

There was no guarantee that everyone wouldn't be distrusting toward my Jewel.

That was why, I decided after talking with the ancestors that I couldn't tell everyone.

"Ah, come to think of it—"

I recalled May saying that she had business in the forest.

"What was May's business here?"

"A new dungeon was formed in the forest, so I went to subjugate it. Actually I didn't have any plan of stopping by here, but I couldn't just overlook it. There were also several dungeons that were in the verge of rampaging."

If what May said was true, then this country's management of the dungeons was a failure.

It was the correct choice to not overlook it.

No, May was here so perhaps it wouldn't be a mistake even if I left it alone?

"I, is it, not a problem anymore?"

"I have destroyed almost all of the dungeons. I also destroyed one before encountering Lyle."

It would be necessary to check it later.

We were travelling through the sky while riding on May's back.

Various things happened but, we ended up having a new comrade joining us.

***

—Inn.

Aria, Miranda, and Eva who returned back washed their body with hot water, finished their meal, and lied down on their bed.

Their body was completely exhausted. They were already at their limit.

The sun was still high but, they wanted to fall asleep like this.

Lyle wasn’t in the room in order to introduce May.

The three women—continued conversing intermittently.

"—This time is also hard."

When Eva said that, Miranda replied with her eyes closed.

"Then it’s fine even if you go home here you know?"

"You’re really an unpleasant woman. If this is a tale, then you’ll be the wicked woman who disrupt the relationship of Lyle and Novem."

"I’m fine being the wicked woman. I’ll take the main prize. If at the end I can become Lyle’s number one then I’ll even become a wicked woman."

It sounded like it was said carelessly, but if it was Miranda then she might really do it. Aria thought that while closing her eyes.

"You two are really energetic. How about going to sleep already?"

Eva stayed silent just for a bit before,

"—There are times you’re strangely unable to sleep even though you’re tired and sleepy isn’t it?"

Aria agreed.

"Yeah. Right now is like that."

Even though they were finally able to rest, the three of them were unable to sleep.

Miranda said to Eva.

"This is a serious talk. Won’t you be happier if you’re singing at a safe place somehow? That’ll also be aligned with your objective."

Eva had the aim to become a famous person.

However—.

"I’ll also achieve that. But, I want to sing a tale that is only known by me. Even if I’ll be forgotten, I’ll be happy if I can leave behind a song that will be sang continuously even for thousands of years."

Miranda didn’t laugh at Eva’s thinking.

"I see—do as you like."

"I don’t need your permission for that. Right now and also in the future I’ll do what I want."

A silent time continued after the two’s conversation was over.

Even so they couldn’t sleep.

Due to sleepiness and fatigue, Aria muttered something that normally she wouldn’t say.

"—About the occurrence this time, I was no good just as expected wasn’t it? You know, against those guys who attacked us I was—"

She was regretting her inability to kill. But then Eva laughed a bit.

"You’re still bothered by that?"

"I’m seriously reflecting here. Because of my fault everyone was troubled—"

Aria got angry, but Miranda spoke to her with an exasperated voice.

"Aria is really an idiot."

"—I myself know really well about that."

It hurt being told that so clearly.

But, Miranda was,

"If you blundered and died, everyone will be sad, You should be aware of that much."

Aria’s eyes opened wide when Miranda said that.

"Miranda, just now—"

Miranda kept her eyes closed.

Eva seemed to got her curiosity pickled and talked to Miranda.

"How unexpected. Aren’t you want to kick down everyone around you and become Lyle’s number one?"

"I won’t deny that but, is there any merit doing that for me? I don’t want to get in Lyle’s way, and I won’t do anything that make Lyle hate me."

Eva got a bit impressed but,

"That’s a nice story. But, that won’t fit a wicked woman role so I’ll cut it out."

Miranda was composed.

"Do as you please. But, it will be me who is in Lyle’s side at the end. The happy end that you wish for won’t come. I’ll let you sing the happy end of me and Lyle. —How unfortunate for you."

"You’re really an unpleasant woman just as I thought. I hate you."

"Oh, is that so? But I’ll recognize you as a comrade as long as you stay useful."

"—I'll support Novem with—everything I have—"

While they were trading insult to each other, sleeper's breathing could be heard before they knew it.

Aria's consciousness was also receding due to the drowsiness.

(Somehow—I'm feeling slightly at ease now.)

She was worrying whether their relationship with each other was fine like this, but she felt like they were able to speak unreservedly a bit more with this—.

***

The next day.

May who went out somewhere at night had returned. She arrived to our room carrying a great amount of luggage.

She was shouldering a large bag. She was wiping the sweat on her forehead looking a bit tired.

"What is this?"

When I asked her what she was carrying this early in the morning, May answered brightly.

"This? It's dungeon's treasure."

The Fourth inside the Jewel was shocked hearing htat.

[What!?]

The massive luggage that May brought.

When I tried opening the bag, inside there were various treasures like gold, silver, armor, magic stone, etc.

Novem peered inside and spoke in admiration.

"You gather this much by yourself? Amazing."

"Ehehe, I’m happy that Novem praise me. But, even this is categorized as few. I had only just gotten independent, so I was unable to stockpile a lot."

Yesterday, I introduced May to everyone.

Then, May was getting especially attached to Novem.

The Fifth had a complicated look, but she didn’t say anything about that. He said [If May got attached to her then there must be no problem]—.

The Fifth was thoroughly soft toward animal.

Had he forgotten about how he was doubting Novem?

Shannon was rubbing her eyes sleepily while peering at the treasure.

"This much is few? We’ll be able to by a lot of sweets if we have this much."

May looked happy hearing that.

"Is that so? Then, I’ll buy a lot of sweets with this. Ah, no good. These are for my marriage."

"Marriage?"

Shannon asked back. Then May puffed up her chest proudly and answered.

"That’s right. The treasures that a qilin stockpiled will be presented to her pair—to her husband."

Sophia made an astounded face.

There were only two men in our party.

And then, among those men I was the only one connected to May.

Naturally she thought that May would be married to me.

"Lyle-dono, wha, wha-wha-wha, what is the meaning of this!?"

It was extremely unfortunate that Aria, Miranda, and Eva who knew about the circumstance hadn’t woken up due to their fatigue.

I could only make excuse by myself.

"No, how should I say it—it’s because of my ancestor’s connection I think?"

"Your ancestor’s?"

I couldn’t understand why the Fifth sounded a bit happy.

[The qilin who I helped at that time now become of help to Lyle like this—this too is fate.]

The Seventh was utterly amazed.

[Have you forgotten how Lyle almost got killed due to that connection?]

Sophia looked like she couldn’t accept it. Then Clara questioned May.

"Does qilin always give dungeon’s treasure to man?"

"Because it looks like it’s better to have money."

It looked like Clara’s curiosity was stimulated.

"Now I understand slightly the reason why people are delighted with divine beast. Besides, it’s all sorts of interesting. With this I’ll be able to learn in detail about the ecology of qilin."

But, May pouted.

"Eh, don’t wanna. There’re a lot of bad humans trying to catch us, so I can’t tell you more than this."

"No, no way!"

Clara was dejected. Putting her aside, Monica shouldered the bag.

From its weight,

"The amount of this is a lot. However, if we have this much, we won’t be troubled with fundraising for the moment. It’s great isn’t it, chicken dickwad."

"Right you are. It’s great isn’t it."

The compensation for that would be my seed.

How should I explain this to everyone?

I couldn’t stop sweating coldly.

The Third was laughing loudly.

[It’s different from our plan at first but, in the end we obtained treasures and even got a qilin to join as comrade. There is no mistake that this is a good omen.]

The Fourth was also satisfied.

[It’s just as Monica said. With this we won’t be troubled for a while.]

Yes, for a while that is.

Even a great amount of money that would allow us to live as we pleased for a while was nothing more than a drop in the bucket if we considered the future. That was why it was troubling.

We who decided to fight Celes was in a really great need of money.

—Reality was really harsh.

Novem was looking at me.

"Wha, what is it?"

"No, I’m thinking that as expected from Lyle-sama. This is my true feeling. To be chosen as a qilin’s pair is an extraordinary good luck after all."

Novem’s smiling face dealt a pain into my heart as though it was stabbed by a thorn.

"You’re—right."

Accepting May meant making children with her.

I still couldn’t resolve myself so I wished to postpone talking about it but, the Fifth was angry saying [What are you dissatisfied about from May huh, you bastard!].

That person, there was absolutely something wrong with him.

Besides the other four were also rejoicing about obtaining qilin as a fighting strength.

I understood that it was necessary to fight Celes, but was it not good of me from being unable to accept this fully?

Novem spoke to me while I was letting out cold sweat.

"Fredericks-sama too is surely going to be happy of this."

He was in fact happy.

But—I mentioned about an ancestor but, I didn’t say anything about it being the Fifth.

Did Novem know about the Fifth keeping a qilin?

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The palace of Laukaan Kingdom.

The king looked haggard after receiving the report from the minister.

The reports that came every day were all about the qilin.

But, those reports came together with the reports of the dungeons getting subjugated.

"—A god of pestilence. Qilin isn’t a divine beast that bring good fortune. It’s going mad and destroyed all the dungeons this country is hiding."

The minister who gave the report said to the king.

"This is a good timing. Your majesty, we don’t have the capability to manage multiple dungeons. It’s good like this."

"Do, don’t screw around! Finally. Finally the position as the leader of the alliance was within reach, and yet! Do you understand my feeling that a mere animal destroyed that chance huh!"

"This country will be destroyed if the dungeon run wild."

"Everything was going well until now. It would be like that too in the future. It should be like that."

The king’s back bent down and he hid his face with both hands.

The minister continued his report but the king didn’t listen—.

Chapter 97 – Heading For the Metropolis of Freedom

Inside the vehicle that departed from Laukaan Kingdom and in the middle of heading for Beim.

I could hear noisy voices from the rear area.

"Stop making a damn mess already, you mysterious creature! Also, who was the one who ate chicken dickwad's snack!?"

"Because I was hungry. Even so human's food is really delicious. I'm pleased with it."

"You said that after eating even the lunches that I prepared! Also, who was the one who ate chicken dickwad's snack! If you don't show yourself then there won't be any lunch!"

"That was Shannon who did it."

"May, you also ate it. You betrayed me!"

"That's because you also ate my portion! Even I wanted to eat more, and yet you wouldn't share."

When the two started arguing, I could hear Monica's low voice.

"Looks like I have found the dunces. No lunch for you two. Let's also exclude the desert from dinner."

"Monica, I'm sorry! I also want to eat lunch."

"Monica forgive me! Even though I told her to stop, May ate the snacks as she pleased."

"Shannon, you're betraying me again!"

"It was you who betrayed me first!"

What a sad conversation.

I didn’t want to learn that the qilin who was called a divine beast was in the same level with Shannon.

Setting that aside, May was a really big eater.

It seemed the creature called qilin was omnivorous.

They could eat anything whether it was meat or vegetable.

Also, they loved sweets too.

She often scrambled for sweets with Shannon. I often caught sight of her getting scolded because of that.

I listened to the argument from the passenger seat while talking to Clara who was sitting beside me.

Clara’s left arm was wearing the new prosthetic arm.

It was really similar with the previous one.

"How is the new prosthetic arm?"

When I tried talking to her, Clara replied with a wry smile.

"This one is prepared by Monica-san and Lily-san for me. Professor Damian is enthusiastic about making a new prosthetic arm and it’s still not finished."

It was a substitute that was made by Monica and Lily-san, even so its performance was better than the prosthetic arm that she previously used.

Clara was satisfied with it, but it seemed the prosthetic arm that Damian was creating weighed her mind.

"I’m happy that he is creating it for me but, I can only feel anxious from hearing him talk."

"What is he planning to do?"

"He said about combining magic tools and attaching a huge cannon. Though I’m scared by the recoil of such thing so I wish he would stop."

What kind of thing he was trying to attach to a prosthetic arm?

Damian’s idea was really out there.

I couldn’t understand it.

This time Clara talked to me.

"Lyle-san too, you have it hard this time."

"Is it about May? But, isn’t it good from the result?"

Although I almost got killed.

"No, I mean that too but, it’s about those three. Since they returned, it seems that they’ve opened their heart to each other or something—"

Hearing Clara’s inarticulate wording, I recalled about Aria and the other two these several days.

I only felt like there was a gap in their relationship the same like before.

"I wonder? Miranda and Eva often argue with each other. They also often make fun of Aria. I think there is no change though?"

Hearing my opinion, conflicted voices also came from inside the Jewel.

[They have gotten a bit better I think?]

[It’s a good thing that there’s improvement.]

[May is really soothing. Rather, it’s good that it seems she is getting along with Shannon.]

[—Fifth is really not concerned at all. As for me, I want to be spared from their arguments too. I’m feeling chilly here wondering where they’ll quarrel for real.]

[It was really horrible with the mothers after all.]

Was it really fine like this?

While pondering that, Clara chuckled and changed the topic.

"Even so, we’re finally heading to Beim."

Beim where the adventurers were aiming to head to was also called as a free city.

As expected from a place that was called as the home of adventurer, a lot of adventurers were aiming to go to Beim.

In Beim there was a dungeon that was under the management of the free city, it was also a place for the adventurers to earn money.

I didn’t know about the situation in detail, but when I thought we could finally head there—I got a bit sad.

There was a party who I promised to meet again.

But, their lives were taken away by Celes.

—The promise couldn’t be kept.

I thought of various things.

Clara was worrying about me who was staying silent.

"What’s the matter?"

"No, I’m thinking that various things has happened."

"That’s true. Lyle-san, you also had wanted poster posted for you this time."

That guy Lionel made me a wanted man.

That guy was doing whatever he pleased.

Even though I still hadn’t done anything.

The Third was laughing.

[Thinking about the future then he isn’t that mistaken though. But, it might become slightly troublesome if your status keep being wanted man like that. Although you’ll stay in other country, there is also a lot of adventurers who come from Bahnseim.]

That’s right.

It would be troubling if the rumor that I was a rebel was spreading.

"It’s troubling."

The wanted poster didn’t look like me, but I wanted to be spared from my name spreading in a bad sense.

"Monica-san did various things but, we can’t confirm whether they’re effective or not."

"Monica did? What did she do?"

It seemed she did something without me noticing.

She said to leave it to her but, really, just what kind of countermeasure did she take?

Clara was exasperated.

"Lyle-san, you didn’t know?"

When I nodded honestly, Clara explained to me what Monica did.

"You see, actually—"

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—Around that time.

Lionel was in a city located at the eastern border of Bahnseim.

He was inside a small bar built from wood that was managed by an old barkeeper.

Even though it wasn’t the operating hours of the bar, he forcefully entered and made the barkeeper prepared alcohol for him.

He used his status as knight and did whatever he pleased.

Lionel drank alcohol from afternoon and spoke his dissatisfaction.

"All of them are incompetents without exception. What do they mean by there is no need to worry. They can’t even gather information about Lyle and his group."

Even though he had prepared wanted posters and even assigned reward for it, there wasn’t even any information that reached him.

He left the fortress in irritation and went around everywhere like this while throwing his weight around at the knights and soldiers protecting the border.

He didn’t even have anything else to do other than that. He passed his time drinking alcohol.

"We’ll absolutely catch them they said. But they aren’t captured no matter how much time passed like this."

The barkeeper looked scared toward Lionel.

Lionel thought it was because he was a knight.

(The people around are behaving humbly when I’m great knight. It feels good.)

The people who were looking down on him before this were now currying favor to him.

It was the greatest feeling for Lionel.

Suddenly his gaze turned toward the bar’s wall. There was a wanted poster there.

It was the wanted poster that had the face of the hateful Lyle drawn on it.

"So it’s placed here too. Looks like they’re doing their job. How admirable."

He highly evaluated the work of others who properly posted the wanted poster he prepared to everywhere.

He drank his alcohol and enjoyed the food. Before long he almost ran out of both.

"I still want to eat and drink. Guess I’ll order more. Oi, old man—eh?"

When he looked at the counter, the barkeeper wasn’t there.

He moved his neck and searched inside the cramped bar, but he couldn’t find him anywhere.

"—What, is he outside? Making me wait like this, it’ll be beheading for him. I’m a baron, the captain of Celes-sama’s special elite guard."

He boasted his status and title while draining up his alcohol. Then he called for the barkeeper with a loud voice.

"Oi, shitty old man! If you don’t come quickly then I’ll make you into my sword’s rust!"

When his voice was starting to become inarticulate, his shoulder was suddenly tapped from behind.

"Aaa?"

He turned around and displayed a displeased face toward the person there. There he found the soldiers protecting this border. It seemed the barkeeper led them here.

Lionel clicked his tongue.

"Oi, what’s your business? If you’re going to call me somewhere then sends a knight to lead me there at the very least. I’m a baron—"

The soldiers ignored Lionel’s rambling and looked at Lionel’s face and the wanted poster they brought alternately.

"There’s no doubt, it’s this guy."

"This guy is the rebel?"

"Drinking beer from afternoon and standing out like this, is he an idiot?"

Lionel flew into rage hearing the soldiers’ exasperated tone and what they were talking about.

"Oi, what’re you guys saying? I’m a rebel? I’m the captain of Celes-sama’s special elite guard, the baron Lionel Walt-sama!"

Lionel stood up and grabbed a soldier’s collar, but the soldier easily pushed Lionel away that he fell on the floor.

"What a noisy drunkard."

"What is this special elite guard thing?"

"Don’t know."

The soldiers looked at each other’s face and tilted their head in puzzlement.

The information from the central hadn’t spread out thoroughly enough through the countryside.

The lowest rank of soldiers still hadn’t heard anything about the story of special elite guard or anything.

Because of that, they didn’t recognize Lionel.

Lionel stood up and placed his hand on his sword’s handle. And then he drew it out.

"You, you’re making light of me! Look carefully at the wanted poster! I’m Lionel. Not that damn Lyle!"

The three soldiers checked the wanted poster.

"No, this is you right? Besides the name is also written Lionel here. You really don’t know when to give up huh. Let’s take this guy quickly."

The soldiers hit away the sword Lionel drew out and he dropped it.

"Wa, wait! I’m Lionel!"

"That’s why, we’re saying you’re the rebel Lionel."

His hands were tied up and the three soldiers led him away.

Lionel pondered what was going on with his drunken mind.

(Wh, why is this happening? Why is it me and not Lyle—)

Then he caught sight of the wanted poster a soldier dropped.

The portrait of Lyle was subtly revised there. Furthermore the name was also written as Lionel.

"Eh?"

Lionel felt like he was dreaming.

"Aa, I see. I drank too much. This is a dream."

Thinking that, he wished that he would wake up from the dream quickly while the soldiers were dragging him away.

In the end, he wasn't released from the prison even when the next day came. He noticed that it was reality and made a ruckus.

However, no one paid any attention to him for several days since then. He kept being locked inside the prison—.

***

"—That was what she did."

At Porter's driver seat.

I doubted my ears when I heard about the matter of Lionel.

"Switching the wanted posters?"

Wanted posters with Lionel's name written on them were prepared and they were posted before we crossed the border.

It was carried out at all the places we stopped by so it sounded unbelievable.

"That fellow, did such thing?"

Then Monica's voice came to the driver seat.

"Fufufu, so you only noticed now. Chicken dickwad is really dull."

Monica showed her face from the door and peeked inside.

"You were also able to do such thing?"

Monica started singing her own praises.

"This Monica is a perfect maid. How can it be possible that I can’t do such trivial thing? I switched all the wanted posters at night, I also substituted the wanted posters that hadn’t been spread out, and then I also exchanged the wanted posters in the checkpoint when we crossed the border. There is nothing impossible for this beautiful Monica. Maid, it’s a full-fledged all-rounded who can do anything! Maid is everything. Everything is none other than maid!"

Clara added.

"I was also helping out."

"I’m sorry that you had to go along with her."

When I apologized to Clara, Monica was biting her handkerchief.

"Chicken dickwad is always like this. You won’t praise me while getting engrossed with other woman only. But, I also love such chicken dickwad."

[This girl is always fooling around but she’s amazing even then.]

The Fifth was strangely impressed.

I ignored Monica who was starting to do a solo act and talked to Clara.

"Then, perhaps over there is in chaos right now."

"Perhaps Lionel-san even got captured unexpectedly."

I laughed at Clara’s joke.

I felt happy learning that even Clara could tell a joke.

"As expected there’s no way that’ll happen."

"Indeed. I myself am thinking that it’s impossible."

Clara’s cheeks slightly reddened in embarrassment. She looked really cute.

The one who broke that heartwarming atmosphere was may.

She came to the driver seat and brought her face close to me.

At this distance our nose almost touched.

"Lyle, do you know about cake? Hey, you know right?"

"Why are you asking that out of nowhere? Also you’re too close."

The Fifth was complaining.

[Be kinder to her.]

When I tried to distance myself, May approached even closer and pushed me.

"Shannon was bragging about it to me. I never eat any cake before!"

"Eh, is that so?"

[At best I gave her baked sweets at my era. A cake is a little bit—I was worried whether it would be alright to let her eat cake.]

The Sixth was shocked hearing the Fifth’s words.

[Even though you never gave anything like sweets to your own children.]

[No, your mothers properly prepared those for you guys already. Those women, they wouldn’t prepare some for May. I wonder why.]

Wasn’t it because there was a problem with the Fifth’s attitude?

Setting that aside, May pushed down me who tried to escape.

"Lyle, I also want to eat cake!"

"Go, got it. I’ll prepare one. I’ll make Monica create one, that’s why stop it!"

"Really As expected from my husband!"

May showed me a smile. Monica made a scary face that made me shuddered.

"This mysterious country hicks creature, you’re claiming to be chicken dickwad’s wife? I won’t recognize that. I’ll be the one to take care of chicken dickwad forever!"

No, what did having a wive had to do with that? I didn’t get it.

"Clara, help me."

I asked for help from the nearby Clara.

Clara ignored us who were being noisy while driving Porter.

Clara’s expression had turned expressionless. She said.

"It seems you two are getting along really well there."

The Third made a ruckus inside the Jewel hearing those words.

[Lyle! Follow up. Give a follow up to Clara-chan. She is angry. Perhaps, she is really angry!]

Eh, why?

May who was sitting on my waist looked at Clara and smiled.

"Do you also want Lyle’s seed? Then you can just ask. I have no intention to monopolize him so don’t worry."

Clara’s glasses slipped down.

"Eh? Se—se, seed?"

Clara got beet red.

Because she was in the middle of driving, Porter suddenly started zigzagging.

The screams of the girls could be heard from the rear area.

May fell down and her faced ended up pressing on my chest.

"Wh, what happened just—now"

The one who came to the driver seat in a bad timing was Sophia.

"—ah"

While I was thinking of how to make an excuse, the Seventh muttered.

[Lyle, why are you always making a cornered situation like this?]

Seeing me lying down while hugging May, she became bright red until her ears.

May lifted up her upper body but, she made a confused look when she saw Sophia.

It seemed that May didn’t understand the situation. —This was extremely bad.

"Wha, WHAT ARE YOU TWO DOINGGGGG!!"

"This is a misunderstanding! Someone please explain! Clara—"

She hit her head and fainted.

Monica looked at me and made an excited face.

This damn automaton, she was enjoying this situation.

The rear area became even noisier after Sophia yelled.

"You're noisy Sophia. Just what is—wait, Lyle! Yo, you, just what're you doing here!?"

Even Aria came. Then the girls showed up one after another.

Miranda was smiling but it was scary.

"Oh, how bold. I also want to fawn on Lyle like that."

Miranda wanted to fawn on me!? No, I didn't mind but for some reason it felt scary.

"Lyle, it's problematic to suddenly start from a qilin. As I thought main heroine should get the first turn. You can't neglect Novem like this! Do it first with Novem."

Eva was saying something but, I wished that you would first notice the misunderstanding before taking problem with the turn.

Shannon was laughing while holding her stomach.

"That face you're making. It made me laugh."

As expected, I hated this girl who was laughing when seeing me in trouble.

"Lyle-sama, that—I think that it might be better to do something like that when it's night."

Novem, I'm begging you listen to me.

"Wait. This is a misunderstanding. This isn’t like how it look."

Then May puffed up her cheeks and got angry.

"Wait, what do you mean by that? You promised to give me your seed!"

[That’s right. Lyle, you have to look after May properly.]

"As I thought! Lyle, come to the back for a bit."

Aria caught me and forcefully dragged me to the back.

Monica was giving treatment to Clara. She was waving her hand smilingly at me.

It seemed she had no intention to solve the misunderstanding.

What perfect maid?

You didn’t even help when your master was in danger.

[Lyle, it become like this because you don’t properly explain about the matter with May.]

[This is no good. Thirty point.]

[More importantly, don’t forget about the cake.]

[Fifth, just shut up already.]

[Lyle, you also have it hard.]

I ignored the noises from the Jewel.

More importantly, just what should I do to get through this situation?

.

Inside the Jewel, the room of the round table.

I showed up there where the five ancestors were waiting for me.

The Third laughed seeing my tired face.

"Please don’t laugh."

[Because, there’s no way I can’t laugh. But, I could already imagine this would happen when the matter of mate came up. Everyone is that isn’t it? They’re really innocent.]

I thought that I would talk about this matter when the situation calmed down.

But then I forgot it and the matter came to light at the worst timing.

Miranda’s smile was scary.

She said something like "There is turn in line so wait a little bit more okay?" to May.

Turn in line—there was something like that? That was the first time I heard about it though.

[Now then, putting that aside, let’s discuss about the future matter before entering Beim. Thanks to May we obtained living fund for the time being.]

The other four also tensed their expression at the Third’s serious atmosphere.

I still couldn’t accept it, and I also wanted to complain but I endured it.

"We’ll be working in order to defeat Celes won’t we? What else is there other than that?"

[Lyle, the Third isn’t talking about our objective, he is talking about the process. Defeating Celes. We understand that. But, we haven’t decided how will we defeat her.]

The Fourth said that. Then the Seventh taught me several methods.

[One method is to join a force that want to defeat Celes. But, the prospect for this is slim. After all there is still few country that consider Celes as dangerous. Even the inside of the country is in confusion. There might be sympathizers gathering but, we don’t know where they are so we can’t join them. Even if there is such force, you’re Celes’s big brother.]

The neighboring countries were aiming at Bahnseim’s weakening. They were also considering observing silently until the country was exhausted.

And then, even if someone made an organization to oppose Celes, my background would become a problem if I tried to join them.

[Next, you can join some kind of force and guide it to defeat Celes. But, the prospect for this is also low. Even if you can enter the service of a country somewhere, it will take too much time.]

Entering a government’s service, accumulated achievement, and got promoted—it would take too much time doing that. I couldn’t even imagine how the situation had become by the time I grasped authority.

[The third method is to search for a hero. You’ll help the person who you thought fit the bill in this.]

Hero—would such person exist?

If there was a hero who could fight Celes, then I too would want to support him with everything I had.

But, the Sixth denied everything.

[These three methods all has problem. That’s why I’ll suggest one more method. Lyle—take a stand.]

I thought carefully of the meaning of the Sixth’s words.

He meant that I should declare my intention to defeat Celes and built up a force.

The Fifth was laughing while I was pondering.

[What’s wrong, do you get a cold feet?]

"I don’t feel hesitation about defeating Celes. But, whether I can do it or not"

[There’s no choice but to do it. That’s the path that you chose.]

While I stayed silent, the Third clapped his hands and gathered everyone’s attention.

[This will also depend on the situation. The decision can only be really made after we gather information. But Lyle, you should think hard about how you will fight beforehand.]

"—Yes."

The Fourth talked about our action for the meantime.

[You will work as adventurer for a while and gather information and fund. It’ll be great if there’s a country that consider Celes as danger, and if there is a hero then you can also ask for his help.]

The Sixth folded his arms while,

[However, you can’t keep being an adventurer forever.]

The Fifth also agreed.

[True.]

I tilted my head in puzzlement. Then the Seventh taught me.

[Lyle, human will pay undue attention to title. For them adventurer is the same like thug. But, if you obtain a proper title, then people will also trust you more.]

The Third continued the explanation.

[Rather than that person personally, his title will be more important. There is many such cases. This matter will also depend on the situation from here on, but let's do everything we can during that time.]

There were a lot of things we wanted to do.

[Gathering information and fund are indispensable, but let's also gather comrades. Their quality will be important but, quantity is also important.]

[When it comes to doing war, trying to work as mercenary also won't be a bad choice.]

[I don't want to recommend this but, we can also ask for May's help. There will be a lot of people drawing close to Lyle who is accompanied by qilin.]

[Use everything that can be used. But even then it's still too lacking to fight Celes. Lyle, have more self-awareness.]

[—Even if it's an act that can make you get cursed as villain, if it's necessary then you have to pull it off. You need to resolve yourself for that.]

I nodded to the five's words, then the Third showed me a smile.

[Let’s do what we can. Let’s see, how about making Lyle accumulate experience to begin with? After all fighting strong person will become a precious experience.]

"A strong person?"

[There is one here right? Besides inside this Jewel, you will be healed right away even if you’re injured. It’ll be impossible to train your body here but, you can accumulate experience.]

The Fourth nodded.

[You’re right. Then in this place, the strongest one among us five is—]

[I’ll become Lyle’s opponent.]

[I guess it’ll be me.]

[Me I guess.]

[I’ll take him on.]

[Of course it’s me.]

—The five of them declared that it was none other than they themselves who were the strongest. Silence filled the room for a while.

What’s this?

Did the five of them think that themselves were the strongest among everyone here?

Then,

[No, it can only be me! Even though I look like this, I have abundant experience in real battle!]

[I’m highly evaluated for my management of domestic affairs but, I’ve never said even once that I cannot fight. I simply didn’t have the chance.]

[How many enemies do you all think I’ve crushed? Whether you consider it from our personal capability or the experiences from battles we had treaded on, mine is on different level.]

[You had only gone through defensive battles Fifth. On the other hand, I’m the family head who had expanded our territory the most than anyone. The number of enemies I have taken down is also the highest than anyone here.]

[Stop with the big talk of an old man who is behind the times. Sixth, the era has changed. The strongest of Walt House is none other than me.]

The five glared at each other and began to quarrel.

[It’s me!]

[Third died in battle at the end wasn’t it!]

The Third and the Fourth began to grapple with each other, while the Fifth and the Sixth were punching each other at the other side.

[You kept losing against me!]

[Shut up! I wouldn’t lose if I was at my heyday! Besides, unarmed martial art is powerless in front of weapon!]

The Seventh was exasperated.

[It’s already no good by the point you rely on the antiquated weapon. This is the era of gun. Lyle, you should learn how to use gun. I’ll teach you.]

The other four looked at the Seventh,

[Is gun usable?]

[The price of a single bullet is too expensive, so I think it’s useless financially.]

[Seeing how it still hasn’t become popular, it’s a failure isn’t it?]

[You always rely on convenient tool too quickly like that. That’s you bad habit.]

Blood veins popped out on the forehead of Seventh who was criticized by the other four.

[You guys—I’ll fill your body with holes!]

Everyone took out their weapons inside the room of the round table and glared at each other.

Was it really that important to decide who was the strongest?

In the first place, if I wanted to accumulate experience, then it would be better to fight various opponents.

In that case the answer was—.

"Ah, then it’ll be fine if I just defeat everyone here!"

When I said that, everyone’s movement froze.

The five turned their face toward me.

[Hey, what do you think he mean by that?]

[Perhaps he is underestimating us?]

[Everyone else will look like small fry when compared to Celes. But, hearing those words said so lightheartedly is also irritating.]

[Lyle, you underestimated us.]

[Ojii-chan is sad, lyle. That’s why, I’ll teach you.]

The five of them approached me.

"Eh? Did I say something wrong? Because, rather than fighting one person, fighting five people will yield more experience right?"

The Fourth and the Sixth grabbed both my arms and they lifted me up.

[You aren’t wrong but, there is this thing called way of talking in this world.]

[Lyle, your thinking is a bit naïve.]

"No, but it’s just like I said isn’t it!?"

When I tried to struggle, the Fifth and the Seventh grabbed my legs and lifted them up.

[Just as you asked, let’s have you fight all of us.]

[Indeed, let’s have Lyle decide who of us is the strongest.]

The Third floated a dark smile and looked at me.

[We can fight it out among us but, let’s take this opportunity to have Lyle accumulate experience too. That way is better. That’s why Lyle, you will fight us five. We’ll ask you later who is the strongest.]

"Wait! Why are you all angry!?"

I was dragged into the memory room like that by the five of them.

"Someone help!"

But, the Sixth spoke while smiling.

[There won’t be any help coming! —Lyle, we’ll make you pile up a lot of experience. We’ll show you our full power. After all, you’ll immediately come back to life even if you die here!]

"Why so suddenly! Ah, wait—"

I was tossed into the memory room.

At that moment—*click* it felt like I heard such metallic sound inside the room of the round table.

But, I had no leeway to mind about that.

Epilogue

"Please wake up."

It was the worst wake up from sleep.

"Please wake up, Lyle-dono."

My body was shaken. I opened my eyes somehow and saw Sophia's face.

She was peering into my face.

"I'm glad. You finally woke up."

I put my hand on my face and recalled what happened inside the Jewel.

It was simply horrible.

The Third's elusive sword and his sword art that was combined with illusion.

The Fourth's fighting style using short sword that made use of speed.

The Fifth's sword might be a magic tool. It split into minute parts and moved around like a whip, capturing and tearing me apart. In addition he also used magic, so I was carved apart, and then I was burned by magic many times.

The Sixth used halberd as his weapon.

The spear that was attached with pickaxe possessed diverse method of attack.

The halberd that was swung around by the big bodied Sixth was completely a menace.

Perhaps the most horrible was the Seventh.

He sniped at my vital spots using handgun.

When I ran away, my joints were shot through many times. I got shot to death many times.

I died many times inside the Jewel. And then each time I revived, my opponent would change.

I was made to fight no matter how many times I fell. I died many times until just before I woke up.

Well, it happened inside the Jewel, so I didn’t actually die for real.

"You’re sweating a lot. Do you want to use a towel?"

"Thank you."

I borrowed a towel from Sophia and wiped my sweat.

"You had a really horrible nightmare. I was at a loss of whether to wake you up or not, but you wouldn’t wake up even when I called, so I was worried."

That was because I was killed by horrible people.

"That much?"

"Yes. Even when Shannon-chan pinched your nose, you wouldn’t wake up."

"—I’ll do the same thing to her when she sleep."

Sophia smiled wryly while covering up for Shannon.

"Please forgive her. She was worried for Lyle-dono in her own way."

"That’s impossible. Surely it was a prank that she did happily."

I thought that I would surely laugh if I did the same thing.

"You shouldn’t say that so easily."

Sophia was making a troubled face.

"More importantly is there anything you need?"

When I looked around, there were only me and Sophia inside.

Porter was also not moving.

"We’re taking a break. I thought that Lyle-dono would want to be awake for it so I came to wake you up."

Looked like I had slept for quite long.

And yet it didn’t feel like my fatigue had gone.

I felt excessively tired.

"Perhaps I’ll go outside too."

Sophia also recommended to me to go outside.

"That’ll be good. You will be surprised if you go outside. I was really surprised."

"Surprised?"

I got curious and stood up, then I went outside.

Then, curiously Damian was outside. There was even a table taken outside where he was drinking tea.

"Oh, you finally came out."

"It’s rare that Damian is drinking tea outside."

"Even I have interest to other thing than research."

Lily-san was accompanying Damian and preparing tea for him.

"Will Lyle-san drink too?"

She presented a cup of tea that was filled with a lot of sugar. I shook my head.

I turned my face toward the direction where the two were looking at and opened my eyes in surprise.

Sophia said.

"Isn’t it amazing? We can see it clearly even from here."

Far away, the free city Beim was visible.

Even though it was still really far, we could see its appearance.

We were in a high elevation, so we were looking down on it.

Abundant land that was spreading through the plain.

The large wall surrounding the huge city and also the many buildings peeking out from there were amazing.

But, the most amazing thing was—.

"This is, my first time seeing a sea."

Sophia said happily. I also expressed my impression after hearing that.

"The sea is very vast."

I could only say such ordinary impression after seeing the sea stretching out at the other side of the land.

I knew about sea as knowledge, but seeing the real thing for the first time made me speechless.

It seemed that everyone was also the same.

Shannon grasped Miranda’s hand while,

"Onee-sama, sea is a really big lake isn’t it?"

"Shannon, a sea and a lake are two different things."

"Eh, no way! Even though I thought that a large lake is a sea!"

Eva was deeply moved. Clara was also in the same state.]

"I’m also seeing this for the first time but, this is certainly amazing."

There was no sea in Bahnseim because it was inland.

Even Eva who was constantly traveling only saw the sea for the first time.

Clara was hugging a book.

"This is more than what I read in book. Certainly I’m glad that I can see this."

Aria turned toward me and waved her hands energetically.

"Both of you, come over here!"

Beside the greatly joyful Aria was Monica shaking her head in exasperation.

"Good grief, to be so happy just from this, everyone is still childish. But, this is a chance to bewitch chicken dickwad by wearing my

specially made swimsuit type maid uniform. I’m really looking forward when we go to swim in the sea."

She was saying something again.

I also felt that the blowing wind felt slightly different.

May sat down and looked at us in puzzlement.

"Is this sight that unusual?"

Novem was standing at a slight distance away from the excited members.

"Novem isn’t really excited huh."

When I called to her, Novem nodded with a troubled look.

"I guess. I’m surprised and troubled of how to react."

Come to think of it, I had no memory of seeing Novem being in high spirits.

She was giving off a strong calm impression since the past.

In contrast with such Novem, the ancestors inside the Jewel were making a ruckus.

[Sea is amazing! It’s surpassed my imagination.]

[I heard that Beim has a harbor but, it’s amazing when looking at it like this.]

[It’s bigger than Centralle. Or rather, it’s like a different world when we crossed over the mountain.]

We passed through a checkpoint located in a mountain—in a valley and arrived at Beim.

The scenery was certainly different from before.

Several small towns and villages were visible around the developed large city.

There were also fields spreading out and tranquil places.

But, the buildings were increasing and crowding close to each other the closer it was to the wall, becoming a metropolis immediately.

[This is—this city looks difficult to be conquered.]

[I can't say if that will be easy to do if it's me. However, even though there is no king or feudal lord here, it's amazing that it can develop this far.]

Free city Beim was also the capital of merchant and adventurer.

There were a lot of adventurers here but, it was the merchants that were practically ruling the place.

Thinking of that, Arumsaas—the academy city that was ruled by the academy came to mind but, the atmosphere here was really different.

We finally came this far.

When I grasped the Jewel while thinking that, the ancestors talked to me.

[Now then, we'll finally start going all-out. Lyle, are you prepared?]

The Third sounded nonchalant like usual.

[If it's this place then there will be a lot of things we can do. And above all else, Celes's hand also won't reach this far.]

The Fourth told me that there was time until Celes's hand reached here.

[Manpower, items, fund—it’s great that it seems we’ll be able to gather them. Even so, I want to try asking what did they do that this place can be this developed.]

The Fifth spoke a slightly twisted sentence, and then,

[Lyle will grow stronger here. Well, everything will begin after we enter inside and gather information but—it’s getting exciting isn’t it, Lyle.]

I felt my anxiety relaxed just for a bit hearing the Sixth’s bright voice.

[It’s also problematic to expect too much but, I guess you can’t help but to have expectation seeing this. Let’s pray that Beim is a convenient place for us. Well, if that’s not the case—we’ll only need to make it convenient for us, that’s all.]

The Seventh was surely laughing with a wicked expression. The other four were also in agreement.

Good grief, these people became reliable when it came to sinister design.

Novem talked to me while I was silently listening to them talking.

"Lyle-sama, what’s the matter?"

"No, it’s nothing. We’ll make this place our home base and do our activity here from here on, so I got thinking for a bit."

Novem looked at my face and nodded.

"If it’s here, Lyle-sama will be able to obtain even more power."

I had to obtain power here, not just a simple strength, but power in various meanings.

If it was impossible then we would only change our home base right away, but let’s hold some expectation toward Beim first.

It was the place where adventurers gathered.

I heard that fame and riches could be obtained here as much as one pleased but—I wish that would be really true.

The Third said to me.

[Lyle, it’s getting fun isn’t it?]

I was exasperated at the Third who was speaking happily. Surely his face was sporting an evil expression right now.

Perhaps my feeling showed up in my face. Novem became worried.

"Lyle-sama?"

"It’s nothing. More importantly—let’s enjoy ourselves here."

Novem was slightly surprised at my words.

She was looking even more surprised than when seeing the sea.

It seemed that the favorite phrase of the ancestors was starting to transfer to me.

I got embarrassed and covered my mouth with my hand.

I thought that I had to be careful but—it wasn’t like I really hated it.

"I’m lying. I’ll properly take action carefully."

"I, I see. Indeed. Let’s take action carefully!"

Novem agreed with me in a fluster, but she strangely looked happy.

Now then, we tried coming to Beim, but what would happen from here on?

***

—Beim’s harbor.

Sailors were working busily on the deck of a ship that was waiting to sail out.

Amidst that, there was a girl who was standing still holding an umbrella.

She had characteristic black hair and purple eyes.

The surrounding were being respectful to that girl.

"Miss—no, captain. It’ll be nice if our voyage this time will be safe too."

The girl was called out and she turned around.

When her black hair that was tied into two side up fluttered, it looked sparkling.

The girl smiled.

"Indeed. I pray that’s the case."

The rowdy sailors laughed hearing the girl’s words.

"I’m relieved with the captain here."

"She is a goddess of fortune for us sailors after all."

"With the captain and this ship, we’ll be able to surmount any kind of sea."

The trusted girl—captain folded her umbrella and placed it on her shoulder. She then raised her voice.

"Something like goddess isn’t anything good though. But, I get the feeling that we’ll be alright too this time. The problem is whether we’ll be able to sell out our cargo or not."

The vice captain who had big body folded his arms and opened his mouth widely to laugh.

"You aren’t wrong!"

The ship that was boarded by the girl and the sailors was really big.

The difference with the ships around them wasn’t just that. Among the many sailing ships, their ship was a steam boat.

There were wheel rims attached on both sides of the hull. White smoke was coming out from the long and narrow chimney that was stretching up vertically.

The ship displayed the height of Beim’s technology, but the number of such ship was very few.

The girl who was entrusted with such precious ship wasn’t chosen to be the ship’s captain only because she was an owner of good luck by all means.

The girl’s father showed himself on the deck.

The middle aged man with swept back black hair had a toned body build.

He was dressed well in a red suit. He had the appearance of a really sharp and able person.

Because there were also harsh looking bodyguards around him, he had an atmosphere like a mafia boss.

The rowdy sailors straightened their posture toward that man.

The man said "Continue your work" to them and approached the girl.

Then,

"My lovely Vera, papa come to see you off."

The man threw away his stiff and slackless air and made an expression of an idiot parent in full force.

The girl—Vera expressed her gratitude even while feeling exasperation.

"You don’t need to especially come to see me off—papa."

The man’s name was Fidel Tres—a wealthy merchant who contended for the first or second spot even in Beim.

"What are you saying! A sea voyage is always fraught with danger. When papa thought that we might not be able to meet again, my chest will feel like it’s torn apart. To say the truth, I want you to just relax in the mansion without going away."

Fidel was worried for his daughter. Vera spoke to reassure him.

"Is there any time that I didn’t return even once?"

"I, it’s just as you say but—"

Fidel who was widely known as a wealthy merchant was recoiling in front of his daughter.

"I’ll be able to return immediately this time. That’s why, wait for me here, papa."

"U, umu."

This scene would make one worried for Fidel instead even though he was the father.

"We'll depart soon, so please get off quickly papa."

"Vera, aren't you being too cold? I think it'll be alright if you are a little bit kinder to papa."

"When I return home okay?"

Vera waved her hand. Fidel then got down from the ship with a reluctant look.

Vera walked toward the bridge with the vice captain in tow.

Suddenly she stopped walking midway and turned around.

"What's the matter captain?"

"—No, I felt intrigued for some reason."

Vera looked at the familiar harbor of Beim and unusually felt something in her mind.

"Is it an unsettling sign?"

The vice captain made a worried face, so Vera shook her head.

"That's not it. Rather—it's a good feeling. Perhaps there'll be something good happen when we return."

"That's good to hear. I'm relieved."

Vera started walking again. And then, she left Beim while harboring some kind of premonition—.

***

The gate at Beim's outer wall was really big.

It was so big that Damian's Dump Car could easily enter. The construction also looked really solid.

The number of people coming and going from such huge gate was also a lot.

People, carriages, anyway the number was great.

The path that was leading until Beim was well maintained, but it was in a terrible state due to the feces of animals like horse or ox.

I also caught sight of people cleaning it up but, they simply threw it away to the side of the road.

I looked up to the Dump Car.

Clara boarded inside in order to tune her prosthetic hand, while Shannon said that she didn’t want to stay outside and went inside Dump Car together with Shannon.

Damian’s Dump Car that was stuffed with a lot of baggage couldn’t be filled with too many people, so the other members were walking outside in a line.

Dump Car was gathering attention from the people around.

This would happen every time.

Porter and Dump Car were standing out no matter where we went.

I turned my gaze to the ground and the surrounding once more while,

"It’s the correct choice to put away Porter huh."

When I said that, Novem who was standing beside me agreed.

"It will get dirty if it’s out here."

Eva spoke out an opposing opinion.

"It should be fine even if it get slightly dirty. It'll be better to be inside Porter rather than walking on this road."

Due to the people's enthusiasm and their body odor and many other things—it was really smelly here.

Nobody wanted to stay here for long.

Aria and Sophia were hiding their mouth using cloth. They used that in place of mask.

"A city's entrance is the same everywhere but, this place is even more horrible compared to other places."

"Isn't it the proof that the number of people passing by here is just that many?"

This place was still outside the city so there was no problem but, I got scared thinking how was the state inside the city.

I hoped that the residences of Beim were lover of cleanliness.

The ancestors were observing this scene from inside the Jewel and commented.

[The number of people is a lot. No, perhaps it's even too many?]

[Thinking of the just the scale from this, it's even more crowded than Centralle as we thought.]

[There is also a harbor here. It's already like this even though there are also other entrances than this place. The inside must be amazing too.]

[Looks like we can expect much from this city.]

[This is the capital of merchant and adventurer you know? I think it also won't be strange if the city is going to ruin.]

The Seventh’s opinion toward adventurer was strict as usual, but we would be troubled if it was too rough inside.

After all it would make us uneasy whether it would be alright to act using this place as our base from now on.

Putting that aside,

"Chicken dickwad, please enter inside the Dump Car. You will get sick if you stay in this kind of place. Now, let’s abandon these women and go inside the car together with Monica!"

Monica was annoying from some time go from being too helpful.

"I’ll be fine."

"What carefree thing you’re spouting in this kind of unsanitary place! Rather than that, the vixen over there is good with magic right? Please use magic to clean this place if you’re free."

Novem smiled at Monica’s unreasonable demand while replying.

Her eyes weren’t smiling.

"Magic isn’t something that convenient."

"How useless even though this is a fantasy world. Then, spider woman."

The next person Monica chose to target was Miranda whose mouth was hidden with a scarf.

"I don’t want. Besides, for someone who can use magic, just this much annoyance can be reduced greatly."

Things like preventing sunburn, mitigating the smell, etc, if you wanted to use magic to protect yourself, then there were many ways to do it. That was what Miranda said.

Monica moved her neck and looked at Novem.

Novem said with an unruffled air.

"Yes, if you’re fine with just reducing these problems than I can do it. But it’s a different matter when it comes to cleaning up this place. —There is no such convenient magic."

If Novem who was a first rate magician said that, then it must be true.

I also had never heard of any such magic.

"Doing nothing but quibbling with sophism—this is why flesh and blood woman is no good."

There, May tugged at the skirt of Monica who was complaining.

"Monica, give me something to eat please."

"You’re still going to eat!?"

"Yep!"

It seemed May was getting bored with lining up. She was thinking of food since some time ago.

I thought that it would be bad to eat at this kind of place though.

"Let’s search a restaurant to eat after we enter inside Beim. Endure it until then okay, May."

May pouted in boredom when I said that.

"I’m bored~"

Novem saw May acting like that and warned her.

"May-chan, please listen properly to what Lyle-sama said."

"Uh! —If that’s what Novem say then I’ll listen. But, why are we queuing? How about entering from the sky?"

We wouldn’t waste time like this if we could do that.

"We will get questioned or investigated if we do that, anyway we can’t easily enter like that."

"Human is really troublesome."

I wanted to agree with May’s words, but let’s ask her to bear with it here.

I was slowly following the queue while thinking around what time we would be able to enter the city. Then my shoulder got poked with a finger.

When I turned around, Eva pointed at behind us with her thumb.

"We’re being glared since some time ago."

When I looked at the direction where Eva pointed, I saw a group that consisted of only man there.

The youth at the middle of that group was the one that stood out the most.

His age was around the same with me.

The reason he stood out was because he looked like the group’s leader.

Also, he was dressed a bit peculiarly.

The great sword he carried on his back was also attention-grabbing but,

His lower body wore a trouser and boots.

Even though he was wearing armor like greaves and so on that covered the area around his waist, his upper body was only covered with a single cloth.

Even that cloth was just a tank top.

Even though his lower body was excessively protected with solid armor, his upper body was practically unprotected.

His skin was tanned and his unkempt black hair was flowing behind.

Perhaps he could be called as wild looking but—.

"Are we being too noisy perhaps?"

Eva spoke to the worried me.

"Inside this line? Surely that’s not all."

Talking voices and sometimes even boisterous voices could be heard from the surrounding.

We weren’t the only one who were particularly noisy.

Miranda looked at the group behind. And then she seemed to notice something and spoke.

"Aa~, it’s something like that huh."

"Eh, you understand?"

I hoped she would teach me who didn’t get it.

Inside the Jewel,

[Rather than that isn’t he dressed strangely? There isn’t anybody around him who dressed the same, so I don’t think that it’s a fashion.]

[Why is he wearing tanktop?]

[The balance is bad.]

[Lyle, ask him this, is that your hobby?]

[No, perhaps it’s because of his house’s rule or religious circumstance. Because that’s appearance is a bit strange if that’s not the case.]

I wished that they would tell me why they were glaring at us rather than commenting about that person’s appearance.

Aria grabbed my hand because I kept glancing behind curiously.

"Don’t mind them. They will pick a fight if you keep doing that."

Sophia also agreed.

"Lyle-dono, please don’t look back too much."

"But it’s weighing my mind."

Then Novem sighed.

"Lyle-sama, there’ll be no end to it if you’re minding the jealousy of the surrounding."

"Jealousy?"

I tilted my head.

Just what would make people envy me?

Looking carefully, the group was dressed like adventurer.

Their equipment looked very shoddy but, they were nothing more but people of the same trade with us.

Monica turned an exasperated face at me who didn’t notice it.

"Chicken dickwad, you’re being served by this Monica. So it should be obvious to you that the surrounding will be jealous at you."

"Is that so? I won’t be jealous if it’s me though."

"Horrible! Chicken dickwad is horrible! But, I will still serve chicken dickwad to the end eve if you’re like that. Because, I am the devoted and lovable automaton Monica after all!"

Her strangeness switch was turned on again. She began to do her little act so I ignored her.

May joined her hands behind her head and,

"Lyle is really slow. You’re like a different person when fighting."

"No, because—"

Voices of dissatisfaction were also rising inside the Jewel at my attitude.

[Lyle is really slow.]

[Even though you'll get it if you just think about it a little.]

[Even I am jealous you know? I'm envious that you can travel together with May.]

[Fifth, please shut up already. But, Lyle—you're really slow.]

[Lyle, even Ojii-chan is getting worried.]

That's why I'm asking what is it?

When I was about to say that, Miranda and Eva suddenly started something as though they had arranged it beforehand.

"You're slow Lyle. It's this kind of thing."

"Lyle is really thickheaded."

The two of them were making fun of me. They hugged me from both sides with a smile that was filled with implication.

"Eh, wait!"

—Then, I heard approaching footsteps from behind and turned around.

The two immediately let me go.

The one who approached in exchange of the two who let me go was the tank top man.

"You're really showing off there. Ee?"

The youth spoke threateningly with a rough voice. In respond I raised my hands to in front of my chest and showed my palms.

"I'm sorry if we're being too noisy."

I could hear [Pathetic][Beat him up][Aim at his eye!] from inside the Jewel, but I wanted to settle this peacefully so I ignored them.

"I can’t feel any sincerity from you. Ee, oi?"

Behind the youth, young men around the same age were gathering while smirking.

Miranda was smiling, but she was drawing out her knife from a position that they couldn’t see.

"There is nothing that Lyle need to apologize for. It’s these boys who were glaring at here first."

Novem also held up her staff and took a stance that could start attacking anytime.

"—You’re telling Lyle-sama to apologize sincerely? That’s unforgivable."

When I thought to stop the two of them, the young men suddenly began to look bashful.

They formed a circle in front of us and conversed with each other.

"The big city is different as expected. We already have a chance meeting with beauties at this kind of place."

"Leaving the village is really the right choice."

"If we can be successful as adventurer after this, we’ll be able to show up those guys in the village."

—It seemed they were young men from the same place who left their village to head to Beim.

Their equipments were lacking were surely because they hadn’t even become adventurer yet.

The youth turned toward me again.

"If you want to show your sincerity, then fight me!"

"—Eh?"

When I thought what he was going to say, he suddenly started asking for a fight.

Then the Seventh muttered.

[Ah, they’re country bumpkins huh.]

More importantly, I couldn’t understand what they were thinking.

"Why should we fight?"

"That’s obvious! If I win, then those girls—"

The youth’s gaze moved toward my companions around me. Then his face reddened in embarrassment and he formed a strange smile.

"Ladies, I am Erhart Baumann. I will free all of you immediately."

The youth—Erhart started to say something. May tilted her head.

"Why?"

"Eh, no—because, you know! A guy who is being surrounded by women like this is obviously a bad guy. I’ll save all of you!"

Aria and Sophia looked at each other, and then they shrugged in incomprehension.

Monica scoffed.

But, the Third spoke emotionally from inside the Jewel.

[This kid, is unexpectedly interesting.]

[Third, please don’t get hyped.]

The Third got quiet due to the Fourth’s rebuke. I then talked to Erhart.

"Err, I can’t accept your challenge."

"Sto, stop nitpicking and draw your weapon! I’ll turn you into the rust of my demon sword Gram yeah!"

Erhart tried to unsheathe the great sword on his back. But he was too slow doing it that his companions helped him.

Even the great sword that he finally unsheathed, he called it a demon sword but—it was a battered great sword that was terribly rusty.

The inside of the Jewel was noisy.

[Demon sword he said! What’s more it has an exaggerated name like Gram, and yet it’s just an inferior good! This man, it seems his specialty is making people laugh.]

The voice of the Sixth sounded like he was holding his stomach while almost bursting to laugh.

It seemed the great sword was an inferior good.

The surrounding also started to notice the commotion and people started to gather around us.

Erhart said to me amidst that.

"Come on, how about you take out your weapon, you cowardly bastard. Or perhaps, you’re going to run away in front of women?"

In the first place, I didn’t say that I accept his challenge.

"No, that’s why I’m telling you this is going to be a bother for the surrounding, so I won’t accept your challenge."

"You bastard is really a total coward. Oi, you girls too, are you really going to follow this kind of man? Ra, rather than him, you girls can join our party instead yeah."

The man called Erhart glared at me and then turned a bashful face toward my companions.

I got involved with a really strange person.

"Come on, fight me! And then, i—if I win, then the ladies will come with me!"

"I refuse."

"Why!? Fight me, you cowardly bastard!"

Erhart stamped his feet in frustration.

We would stay in Beim from now on but, I got really uneasy like this.

To be continued in Sevens 9

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